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THE

PIRATE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "WAVERLEY, KENILWORTH," &c.

Nothing in him ———
But doth suffer a sea-change.
Tempest.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE PIRATE.

CHAPTER I.

> We'll keep our customs—what is law itself,
> But old establish'd custom? What religion,
> (I mean, with one-half of the men that use it,)
> Save the good use and wont that carries them
> To worship how and where their fathers worshipp'd?
> All things resolve in custom—we'll keep ours.
>
> *Old Play.*

We left the company of Magnus Troil engaged in high wassail and revelry. Mordaunt, who, like his father, shunned the festive cup, did not partake in the cheerfulness which the ship diffused among the guests as they unloaded it, and the pinnace, as it circumnavigated the table. But, in low spirits as he seemed, he was the more

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meet prey for the story-telling Halcro, who had fixed upon him, as in a favourable state to play the part of listener, with something of the same instinct that directs the hooded crow to the sick sheep, which will most patiently suffer itself to be made a prey of. Joyfully did the poet avail himself of the advantages afforded by Mordaunt's absence of mind, and unwillingness to exert himself in measures of active defence. With the unfailing dexterity peculiar to prosers, he contrived to dribble out his tale to double its usual length, by the exercise of the privilege of unlimited digressions; so that the story, like a horse on the *grand pas*, seemed to be advancing with rapidity, while, in reality, it scarce was progressive at the rate of a yard in the quarter of an hour. At length, however, he had discussed, in all its various bearings and relations, the history of his friendly landlord, the master-fashioner in Russel-street, including a short sketch of five of his relations, and anecdotes of three of his principal rivals, together with some general observations upon the dress and fashion of the period; and having marched thus far through the environs and outworks of

his story, he arrived at the body of the place, for so the Wits' Coffee-house might be termed. He paused on the threshold, however, to explain the nature of his landlord's right occasionally to intrude himself into this well-known temple of the Muses.

"It consisted," said Halcro, "in the two principal points, of bearing and forbearing; for my friend Thimblethwaite was a person of wit himself, and never quarrelled with any jest which the wags who frequented that house were flinging about, like squibs and crackers on a rejoicing night; and then, though some of the wits—ay, and I daresay the greater number, might have had some dealings with him in the way of trade, he never was the person to put any man of genius in unpleasant remembrance of such trifles. And though, my dear young Master Mordaunt, you may think this is but ordinary civility, because in this country it happens seldom that there is either much borrowing or lending, and because, praised be Heaven, there are neither bailiffs nor sheriff-officers to take a poor fellow by the neck, and because there are no prisons to put him into

when they have done so, yet, let me tell you, that such a lamb-like forbearance as that of my poor, dear, deceased landlord, Thimblethwaite, is truly uncommon within the London bills of mortality. I could tell you of such things that have happened even to myself, as well as others, with these cursed London tradesmen, as would make your hair stand on end.—But what the devil has put old Magnus into such note? he shouts as if he were trying his voice against a north-west gale of wind."

Loud indeed was the roar of the old Udaller, as, worn out of patience by the schemes of improvement which the factor was now undauntedly pressing upon his consideration, he answered him, (to use an Ossianic phrase,) like a wave upon a rock.

"Trees, Sir Factor—talk not to me of trees! I care not though there never be one on the island, tall enough to hang a coxcomb upon. We will have no trees but those that rise in our havens—the good trees that have yards for boughs, and standing-rigging for leaves."

"But touching the draining of the lake of

Braebaster, whereof I spoke to you, Master Magnus Troil," answered the persevering agriculturist, " whilk I opine would be of so much consequence, there are two ways—down the Linklater glen, or by the Scalmester burn. Now, having levelled both"——

" There is a third way, Master Yellowley," answered the landlord.

" I profess I can see none," replied Triptolemus, with as much good faith as a joker could desire in the subject of his wit, " in respect that the hill called Braebaster on the south, and ane high bank on the north, of whilk I cannot carry the name rightly in my head"——

" Do not tell us of hills and banks, Master Yellowley—there is a third way of draining the loch, and it is the only way that shall be tried in my day. You say my Lord Chamberlain and I are the joint proprietors—so be it—let each of us start an equal proportion of brandy, lime-juice, and sugar, into the loch—a ship's cargo or two will do the job—let us assemble all the jolly Udallers of the country, and in twenty-four hours

you shall see dry ground where the loch of Braebaster now is."

A loud laugh of applause, which for a time actually silenced Triptolemus, attended a jest so very well suited to time and place—a jolly toast was given—a merry song was sung—the ship unloaded her sweets—the pinnace made its genial round—the duet betwixt Magnus and Triptolemus, which had attracted the attention of the whole company from its superior vehemence, now once more sunk, and merged into the general hum of the convivial table, and the poet Halcro again resumed his usurped possession of the ear of Mordaunt Mertoun.

"Whereabouts was I?" he said, with a tone which expressed to his weary listener more plainly than words could, how much of his desultory tale yet remained to be told. "O, I remember—we were just at the door of the Wits' Coffee-house—it was set up by one——"

"Nay, but, my dear Master Halcro," said his hearer, somewhat impatiently, "I am desirous to hear of your meeting with Dryden."

"What, with glorious John?—true—ay—where was I? At the Wits' Coffee-house—Well, in at the door we got—the waiters, and so forth, staring at me; for as to Thimblethwaite, honest fellow, his was a well-known face.—I can tell you a story about that"——

"Nay, but John Dryden," said Mordaunt, in a tone which deprecated further digression.

"Ay, ay, glorious John—where was I?—Well, as we stood close by the bar, where a fellow sat grinding of coffee, and another putting up tobacco into penny parcels—a pipe and a dish cost just a penny—then and there it was that I had the first peep of him. One Dennis sat near him, who——"

"Nay, but John Dryden—what like was he?" demanded Mordaunt.

"Like a little fat old man, with his own grey hair, and in a full-trimmed black suit, that sate close as a glove. Honest Thimblethwaite let no one but himself shape for glorious John, and he had a slashing hand at a sleeve, I promise you—But there is no getting a mouthful of common

sense spoken here—damn that Scotchman, he and old Magnus are at it again."

It was very true; and although the interruption did not resemble a thunder-clap, to which the former stentorian exclamation of the Udaller might have been likened, it was a close and clamorous dispute, maintained by question, answer, retort, and repartee, as closely huddled upon each other as the sounds which announce from a distance a close and sustained fire of musketry.

"Hear reason, sir?" said the Udaller; "we will hear reason, and speak reason too; and if reason fall short, you shall have rhyme to boot.—Ha, my little friend Halcro!"

Though cut off in the middle of his best story, (if that could be said to have a middle, which had neither beginning nor end,) the bard bristled up at the summons, like a corps of light infantry when ordered up to the support of the grenadiers, looked smart, slapped the table with his hand, and denoted his becoming readiness to back his hospitable landlord, as becomes a well entertained guest. Triptolemus was a little daunted at this rein-

forcement of his adversary; he paused, like a cautious general, in the sweeping attack which he had commenced on the peculiar usages of Zetland, and spoke not again until the Udaller poked him with the insulting query, "Where is your reason now, Master Yellowley, that you were deafening me with a moment syne?"

"Be but patient, worthy sir," replied the agriculturist; "what on earth can you or any other man say in defence of that thing you call a plough, in this blinded country? Why, even the savage Highlandmen, in Caithness and Sutherland, can make more work, and better, with their gascromh, or whatever they call it."

"But what ails you at it, sir?" said the Udaller; "let me hear your objections to it. It tills our land, and what would ye more?"

"It hath but one handle or stilt," replied Triptolemus.

"And who the devil," said the poet, aiming at something smart, "would wish to need a pair of stilts, if he can manage to walk with a single one?"

"Or tell me," said Magnus Troil, "how it

were possible for Neil of Lupness, that lost one arm by his fall from the crag of Nekbreckan, to manage a plough with two handles ?"

"The harness is of raw seal-skin," said Triptolemus.

"It will save dressed leather," answered Magnus Troil.

"It is drawn by four wretched bullocks," said the agriculturist, "that are yoked breast-fashion; and two women must follow this unhappy instrument, and complete the furrow with a couple of shovels."

"Drink about, Master Yellowley," said the Udaller; "and, as you say in Scotland, 'never fash your thumb.' Our cattle are too high-spirited to let one go before the other; our men are too gentle and well nurtured to take the working-field without the women's company; our ploughs till our land—our land bears us barley; we brew our ale, eat our bread, and make strangers welcome to their share of it. Here's to you, Master Yellowley."

This was said in a tone meant to be decisive of the question; and, accordingly, Halcro whis-

pered to Mordaunt, "that has settled the matter, and now we will get on with glorious John.—There he sat in his suit of full-trimmed black; two years due was the bill, as mine honest landlord afterwards told me,—and such an eye in his head!—none of your burning blighting falcon eyes, which we poets are apt to make a rout about,—but a soft, full, thoughtful, yet penetrating glance—never saw the like of it in my life, unless it were Stephen Kleancogg, the fiddler, at Papastons, who——"

"Nay, but John Dryden," said Mordaunt, who, for want of better amusement, had begun to take a sort of pleasure in keeping the old gentleman to his narrative, as men herd in a restive sheep, when they wish to catch him. He returned to his theme, with his usual phrase of "Ay, true—glorious John—Well, sir, he cast his eye, such as I have described it, on mine landlord, 'and honest Tim,' said he, 'what hast thou got here?' and all the wits, and lords, and gentlemen, that used to crowd round him, like the wenches round a pedlar at a fair, they made way for us, and up we came to the fire-side,

where he had his own established chair,—I have heard it was carried to the balcony in summer, but it was by the fire-side when I saw it,—so up came Tim Thimblethwaite, through the midst of them, as bold as a lion, and I followed with a small parcel under my arm, which I had taken up partly to oblige my landlord, as the shop porter was not in the way, and partly that I might be thought to have something to do there, for you are to think there was no admittance at Will's for strangers who had no business there. —I have heard that Sir Charles Sedley said a good thing about that——"

"Nay, but you forget glorious John," said Mordaunt.

"Ay, glorious you may well call him. They talk of their Blackmore, and Shadwell, and such like,—not fit to tie the latchets of John's shoes.—'Well,' he said to my landlord, 'what have you got there?' and he, bowing, I warrant, lower than he would to a duke, said he had made bold to come and shew him the stuff which Lady Elizabeth had chose for her night-gown.—'And which of your geese is that, Tim, who has got it

tucked under his wing?'—'He is an Orkney goose, if it please you, Mr Dryden,' said Tim, who had wit at will, 'and he hath brought you a copy of verses for your honour to look at.'—'Is he amphibious?' said glorious John, taking the paper, and methought I could rather have faced a battery of cannon than the crackle it gave as it opened, though he did not speak in a way to dash one neither;—and then he looked at the verses, and he was pleased to say, in a very encouraging way, indeed with a sort of good-humoured smile on his face, and certainly for a fat elderly gentleman,—for I would not compare it to Minna's smile, or to Brenda's,—he had the pleasantest smile I ever saw,—'Why, Tim,' he said, 'this goose of yours will prove a swan on your hands.' With that he smiled a little, and they all laughed, and none louder than those who stood too far off to hear the jest; for every one knew when he smiled there was something worth laughing at, and so took it upon trust; and the word passed through among the young Templars, and the wits, and the smarts, and there was nothing but question on question who we were;

and one French fellow was trying to tell them it was only Monsieur Tim Thimblethwaite; but he made such work with his Dumbletate and Timbletaite, that I thought his explanation would have lasted—"

"As long as your own story," thought Mordaunt; but the narrative was at length finally cut short, by the strong and decided voice of the Udaller.

"I will hear no more on it, Mr Factor," he exclaimed.

"At least let me say something about the breed of horses," said Yellowley, in rather a cry-mercy tone of voice. "Your horses, my dear sir, resemble cats in size, and tigers in devilry!"

"For their size," said Magnus, "they are the easier for us to get off and on them—(as Triptolemus experienced this morning, thought Mordaunt to himself)—and, as for their devilry, let no one mount them that cannot manage them."

A twinge of self-conviction, on the part of the agriculturist, prevented him from reply. He darted a deprecatory glance at Mordaunt, as if for the purpose of imploring secrecy respect-

ing his tumble; and the Udaller, who saw his advantage, although he was not aware of the cause, pursued it with the high and stern tone proper to one who had all his life been unaccustomed to meet with, and unapt to endure opposition.

"By the blood of Saint Magnus the Martyr," he said, "but you are a fine fellow, Mr Factor Yellowley! You come to us from a strange land, understanding neither our laws, nor our manners, nor our language, and you propose to become governor of the country, and that we should all be your slaves!"

"My pupils, worthy sir, my pupils!" said Yellowley, "and that only for your own proper advantage."

"We are too old to go to school," said the Zetlander. "I tell you once more, we will sow and reap our grain as our fathers did—we will eat what God sends us, with our doors open to the stranger, even as theirs were open. If their is ought imperfect in our practice, we will amend it in time and season; but the blessed Baptist's holiday was made for light hearts and quick heels.

He that speaks a word more of reason, as you call it, or any thing looks like it, shall swallow a pint of sea-water—he shall, by this hand!—and so fill up the good ship, the Jolly Mariner of Canton, once more, for the benefit of those that will stick by her; and let the rest have a fling with the fiddlers, who have been summoning us this hour. I will warrant every wench is on tiptoe by this time. Come, Mr Yellowley, no unkindness, man—why, man, thou feelest the rolling of the Jolly Mariner still—(for, in truth, honest Triptolemus shewed a little unsteadiness of motion, as he rose to attend his host)—but never mind, we shall have thee find thy land-legs to reel it with yonder bonnie belles. Come along, Triptolemus—let me grapple thee fast, lest thou *trip*, old Triptolemus—ha, ha, ha!"

So saying, the portly though weather-beaten hulk of the Udaller sailed off like a man of war that had braved a hundred gales, having his guest in tow like a recent prize. The greater part of the revellers followed their leader with loud jubilee, although there were several staunch topers, who, taking the option left them by the Udaller,

remained behind to relieve the Jolly Mariner of a fresh cargo, amidst many a pledge to the health of their absent landlord, and to the prosperity of his roof-tree, with whatsoever other wishes of kindness could be devised, as an apology for another pint-bumper of noble punch.

The rest soon thronged the dancing-room, an apartment which partook of the simplicity of the time and of the country. Drawing-rooms and saloons were then unknown in Scotland, save in the houses of the nobility, and of course absolutely so in Zetland; but a long, low, anomalous store-room, sometimes used for the depositation of merchandize, sometimes for putting aside lumber, and a thousand other purposes, was well known to all the youth of Dunrossness, and many a department besides, as the scene of the merry dance, which was sustained with so much glee when Magnus Troil gave his frequent feasts.

The first appearance of this ball-room might have shocked a fashionable party, assembled for the quadrille or the waltz. Low as we have stated the apartment to be, it was but imperfectly illuminated by lamps, candles, ship-lanterns, and a

variety of other *candelabra*, which served to throw a dusky light upon the floor, and upon the heaps of merchandize and miscellaneous articles which were heaped around; some of them stores for the winter; some, goods destined for exportation; some the tribute of Neptune, paid at the expence of ship-wrecked vessels, whose owners were unknown; some, articles of barter received by the proprietor, who, like most others at the period, was somewhat of a merchant as well as a landholder, in exchange for the fish, and other articles, the produce of his estate. All these, with the chests, boxes, and bales, which contained them, had been drawn aside, and piled one above the other, in order to give room for the dancers, who, light and lively as if they had occupied the most splendid saloon in the parish of St James's, executed their national dances with equal grace and activity.

The groupe of old men who looked on, bore no inconsiderable resemblance to a party of aged tritons, engaged in beholding the sports of the sea-nymphs; such a hard look had most of them acquired by contending with the elements, and

so much did the shaggy hair and beards, which many of them cultivated after the ancient Norwegian fashion, give their heads the character of these supposed natives of the deep. The young people, on the other hand, were uncommonly handsome, tall, well-made, and shapely; the men with long fair hair, and, until broken by the weather, a fresh ruddy complexion, which, in the females, was softened into a bloom of infinite delicacy. Their natural good ear for music qualified them to second to the utmost the exertions of a band, whose strains were by no means contemptible; while the elders, who stood around or sat quiet upon the old sea-chests, which served for chairs, criticised the dancers, as they compared their execution with their own exertions in former days; or, warmed by the cup and flagon, which continued to circulate among them, snapped their fingers, and beat time with their feet to the music.

Mordaunt looked upon this scene of universal mirth with the painful recollection, that he, thrust aside from his pre-eminence, no longer exercised the important duties of chief of the dancers, or office of leader of the revels, which had been as-

signed to the stranger Cleveland. Anxious, however, to suppress the feelings of his own disappointment, which he felt it was neither wise to entertain nor manly to display, he approached his fair neighbours, to whom he had been so acceptable at table, with the purpose of inviting one of them to become his partner in the dance. But the awfully ancient old lady, even the Lady Glowrowrum, who had only tolerated the exuberance of her nieces' mirth during the time of dinner, because her situation rendered it then impossible for her to interfere, was not disposed to permit the apprehended renewal of the intimacy implied in Mertoun's invitation. She therefore took upon herself, in the name of her two nieces, who sat pouting beside her in displeased silence, to inform Mordaunt, after thanking him for his civility, that the hands of her nieces were engaged for that evening; and, as he continued to watch the party at a little distance, he had an opportunity of being convinced that the alleged engagement was a mere apology to get rid of him, when he saw the two good-humoured sisters join the dance, under the auspices of the next

young men who asked their hands. Incensed at so marked a slight, and unwilling to expose himself to another, Mordaunt Mertoun drew back from the circle of dancers, shrouded himself amongst the mass of inferior persons who crowded into the bottom of the room as spectators, and there, concealed from the observation of others, digested his own mortification as well as he could, (that is to say, very ill,) and with all the philosophy of his age—that is to say, with none at all.

CHAPTER II.

A torch for me—let wantons, light of heart,
Tickle the useless rushes with their heels;
For I am proverb'd with a grandsire phrase—
I'll be a candle-holder, and look on.

Romeo and Juliet.

THE youth, says the moralist Johnson, cares not for the boy's hobby-horse, nor the man for the youth's mistress; and therefore the distress of Mordaunt Mertoun, when excluded from the merry dance, may seem trifling to many of my readers, who would, nevertheless, think they did well to be angry if deposed from their usual place in an assembly of a different kind. There lacked not amusement, however, for those whom the dance did not suit, or who were not happy enough to find a partner to their liking. Halcro, now completely in his element, had assembled around him an audience, to whom he was declaiming his poetry with all the enthusiasm of

glorious John himself, and receiving in return the usual degree of applause allowed to minstrels who recite their own rhymes—so long at least as the author is within hearing of the criticism. Halcro's poetry might indeed have interested the antiquary as well as the admirer of the Muses, for several of his pieces were translations or imitations from the Scaldic sages, which continued to be sung by the fishermen of these islands even until a very late period; insomuch, that when Gray's poems first found their way to Orkney, the old people recognized at once, in the ode of the "Fatal Sisters," the Runic rhimes which had amused or terrified their infancy under the title of the Magicians, and which the fishers of North Ronaldsha, and other remote isles, used still to sing when asked for a Norse ditty.

Half-listening, half-lost in his own reflections, Mordaunt Mertoun stood near the door of the apartment, and in the outer ring of the little circle formed around old Halcro, while the bard chaunted to a low, wild, monotonous air, varied only by the efforts of the singer to give interest

and emphasis to particular passages, the following imitation of a Northern war-song.

The Song of Harold Harfager.

The sun is rising dimly red,
The wind is wailing low and dread;
From his cliff the eagle sallies,
Leaves the wolf his darksome vallies;
In the mist the ravens hover,
Peep the wild dogs from the cover,
Screaming, croaking, baying, yelling,
Each in his wild accents telling,
"Soon we feast on dead and dying,
Fair-hair'd Harold's flag is flying."

Many a crest on air is streaming,
Many a helmet darkly gleaming,
Many an arm the axe uprears,
Doom'd to hew the wood of spears.
All along the crowded ranks,
Horses neigh and armour clanks;
Chiefs are shouting, clarions ringing,
Louder still the bard is singing,

"Gather footmen, gather horsemen,
To the field, ye valiant Norsemen!

"Halt ye not for food or slumber,
View not vantage, count not number;
Jolly reapers, forward still,
Grow the crop on vale or hill,
Thick or scatter'd, stiff or lithe,
It shall down before the scythe.
Forward with your sickles bright,
Reap the harvest of the fight—
Onward footmen, onward horsemen,
To the charge, ye gallant Norsemen!

"Fatal chuser of the slaughter,
O'er you hovers Odin's daughter;
Hear the choice she spreads before ye,—
Victory, and wealth, and glory;
Or old Valhalla's roaring hail,
Her ever-circling mead and ale,
Where for eternity unite
The joys of wassail and of fight.
Headlong forward, foot and horsemen,
Charge and fight, and die like Norsemen!"—

"The poor unhappy blinded heathens!" said Triptolemus, with a sigh deep enough for a groan; "they speak of their eternal cups of

ale, and I question if they kenn'd how to manage a croft land of grain!"

"The cleverer fellows they, neighbour Yellowley," answered the poet, "if they made ale without barley."

"Barley!—alack-a-day!" replied the more accurate agriculturist, "who ever heard of barley in these parts? Bear, my dearest friend, bear is all they have, and wonderment it is to me that they ever see an awn of it. Ye scart the land with a bit thing ye ca' a pleugh—ye might as weel give it a ritt with the teeth of a redding-kame. O, to see the sock, and the heel, and the sole-clout of a real steady Scottish pleugh, with a chield like a Sampson between the stilts, laying a weight on them would keep down a mountain; twa stately owsen, and as many broad-breasted horse in the traces, going through soil and till, and leaving a fur in the ground would carry off water like a causeyed siever! They that have seen a sight like that, have seen something to crack about in another sort, than those unhappy auld-warld stories of war and slaughter, of which the land has seen even but too mickle, for a' your

singing and soughing awa' in praise of such bloodthirsty doings, Master Claud Halcro."

"It is a heresy," said the animated little poet, bridling and drawing himself up, as if the whole defence of the Orcadian Archipelago rested on his single arm—"It is a heresy so much as to name one's native country, if a man is not prepared when and how to defend himself—ay, and to annoy another. The time has been, that if we made not good ale and aquavitæ, we knew well enough where to find that which was ready made to our hand; but now the descendants of Sea-kings and Champions, and Berserkars, are become as incapable of using their swords, as if they were so many women. Ye may praise them for a strong pull on an oar, or a sure foot on a skerry; but what else could glorious John himself say of ye, my good Hialtlanders, that any man would listen to?"

"Spoken like an angel, most noble poet," said Cleveland, who, during an interval of the dance, stood near the party in which this conversation was held. "The old champions you talked to us about yesternight, were the men to make a harp ring—gallant fellows, that were friends to

the sea, and enemies to all that sailed on it. Their ships, I suppose, were clumsy enough; but if it is true that they went upon the account as far as the Levant, I scarce believe that ever better fellows unloosed a top-sail."

"Ay," replied Halcro, "there you spoke them right. In those days no man could call their life and means of living their own, unless they dwelt twenty miles out of sight of the blue sea. Why, they had public prayers put up in every church in Europe, for deliverance from the ire of the Normans. In France and England, ay and in Scotland too, for as high as they hold their heads now-a-days, there was not a bay or a haven, but it was freer to our forefathers than to the poor devils of natives; and now we cannot, forsooth, so much as grow our own barley without Scots help —(here he darted a sarcastic glance at the factor)—I would I saw the time we were to measure arms with them again."

"Spoken like a hero once again," said Cleveland.

"Ah!" continued the little bard, "I would it were possible to see our barks, once the water-dragons of the world, swimming with the black-

raven standard waving at the topmast, and their decks glimmering with arms, instead of being heaped up with stock-fish—winning with our fearless hands what the niggard soil denies—paying back all old scorn and modern injury—reaping where we never sowed, and felling what we never planted—living and laughing through the world, and smiling when we were summoned to quit it."

So spoke Claud Halcro, in no serious, or at least most certainly in no sober mood, his brain (never the most stable) whizzing under the influence of fifty well-remembered sagas, besides five bumpers of usquebaugh and brandy; and Cleveland, between jest and earnest, clapped him on the shoulder, and again repeated, "Spoke like a hero."

"Spoke like a fool, I think," said Magnus Troil, whose attention had been also attracted by the vehemence of the little bard—"where would you cruize upon, or against whom?—we are all subjects of one realm, I trow, and I would have you to remember, that your voyage may bring up at Execution-dock.—I like not the Scots—no

offence, Mr Yellowley—that is, I would like them well enough if they would stay quiet in their own land, and leave us at peace with our own people, and manners, and fashions; and if they would but abide there till I went to harry them like a mad old Berserkar, I would leave them in peace till the day of judgment. With what the sea sends us, and the land lends us, as the proverb says, and a set of honest neighbourly folks to help us to consume it, so help me Saint Magnus, as I think we are even but too happy!"

"I know what war is," said an old man, "and I would as soon sail through Sumburgh-roost in a cockle-shell, or in a worse loom, as I would venture there again."

"And, pray, what wars knew your valour?" said Halcro, who, though forbearing to contradict his landlord from a sense of respect, was not a whit inclined to abandon his argument.

"I was pressed," answered the old Triton, "to serve under Montrose, when he came here about the sixteen hundred and fifty-one, and carried a sort of us off, will ye nill ye, to get our throats cut in the wilds of Strathnavern—I shall never for-

get it—we had been hard put to it for victuals—what would I have given for a luncheon of Burgh Westra beef—ay, or a mess of sour sillocks ?—When our Highlandmen brought in a dainty drove of kyloes, much ceremony there was not, for we shot and felled, and flayed and roasted, and broiled, as it came to every man's hand; till when, just when our beards were at the greasiest, we heard—God preserve us—a tramp of horse, then twa or three drapping shots,—then came a full salvo,—and then, when the officers crying on us to stand, and maist of us were looking which way we might run away, down they broke, horse and foot, with old John Urry, or Hurry, or whatever they called him—he hurried us that day, and worried us to boot—and we began to fall as thick as the stots that we were felling five minutes before."

"And Montrose," said the soft voice of the graceful Minna; "what came of Montrose, or how looked he ?"

"Like a lion with the hunters before him," answered the old gentleman; "but I looked not

twice his way, for my own lay right over the hill."

"And so you left him?" said Minna, in a tone of the deepest contempt.

"It was no fault of mine, Mistress Minna," answered the old man, somewhat out of countenance; "but I was there with no choice of my own; and, besides, what good could I have done?—all the rest were running like sheep, and why should I have staid?"

"You might have died with him," said Minna.

"And lived with him to all eternity, in immortal verse!" added Claud Halcro.

"I thank you, Mistress Minna," replied the plain-dealing Zetlander; "and I thank you, my old friend Claud;—but I would rather drink both your healths, in this good bicker of ale, like a living man as I am, than that you should be making songs in mine honour, for having died forty or fifty years agone. But what signified it,—run or fight, 'twas all one;—they took Montrose, poor fellow, for all his doughty deeds, and they took me that did no doughty deeds

at all; and they hanged him, poor man, and as for me——"

"I trust in Heaven they flogged and pickled you," said Cleveland, worn out of patience with the dull narrative of the peaceful Zetlander's poltroonery, of which he seemed so wondrous little ashamed.

"Flog horses, and pickle beef," said Magnus. "Why, you have not the vanity to think, that, with all your quarter-deck airs, you will make poor old neighbour Haagen ashamed that he was not killed some scores of years since? You have looked on death yourself, my doughty young friend, but it was with the eyes of a young man who wishes to be thought of; but we are a peaceful people,—peaceful, that is, as long as any one should be peaceful, and that is till some one has the impudence to wrong us, or our neighbours; and then, perhaps, they may not find our northern blood much cooler in our veins than was that of the old Scandinavians that gave us our names and lineage.—Get ye along, get ye along to the sword-dance, that the strangers that are

amongst us may see that our hands and our weapons are not altogether strangers."

A dozen cutlasses, selected hastily from an old arm-chest, and whose rusted hue bespoke how seldom they left the sheath, armed the same number of young Zetlanders, with whom mingled six maidens, led by Minna Troil; and the minstrelsy instantly commenced a tune appropriate to the ancient Norwegian war-dance, the evolutions of which are perhaps still practised in these remote islands.

The first movement was graceful and majestic, the youths holding their swords erect, and without much gesture; but the tune, and the corresponding motions of the dancers, became gradually more and more rapid,—they clashed their swords together, in measured time, with a spirit which gave the exercise a dangerous appearance in the eye of the spectator, though the firmness, justice, and accuracy, with which the dancers kept time with the stroke of their weapons, did, in truth, ensure its safety. The most singular part of the exhibition was the courage exhibited by the female performers, who now, surrounded by the swords-

men, seemed like the Sabine maidens in the hands of their Roman lovers; now, moving under the arch of steel which the young men had formed, by crossing their weapons over the heads of their fair partners, resembled the band of Amazons when they first joined in the Pyrrhic dance with the followers of Theseus. But by far the most striking and appropriate figure was that of Minna Troil, whom Halcro had long since entitled the Queen of Swords, and who, indeed, moved amidst the swordsmen with an air which seemed to hold all the drawn blades as the proper accompaniment of her person, and the implements of her pleasure. And when the mazes of the dance became more intricate, when the close and continuous clash of the weapons made some of her companions shrink, and shew signs of fear, her cheek, her lip, and her eye, seemed rather to announce, that, at the moment when the weapons flashed fastest, and rung sharpest around her, she was most completely self-possessed, and in her own element. Last of all, when the music had ceased, and she remained for an instant upon the floor by herself, as the rule of the dance required,

the swordsmen and maidens, who departed from around her, seemed the guards and the train of some princess, who, dismissed by her signal, were leaving her for a time to solitude. Her own look and attitude, wrapped, as she probably was, in some vision of the imagination, corresponded admirably with the ideal dignity which the spectators ascribed to her; but, almost immediately recollecting herself, she blushed, as if conscious she had been, though but for an instant, the object of undivided attention, and gave her hand gracefully to Cleveland, who, though he had not joined in the dance, assumed the duty of conducting her to her seat.

As they passed, Mordaunt Mertoun might observe that Cleveland whispered into Minna's ear, and that her brief reply was accompanied with even more discomposure of countenance than she had manifested when encountering the gaze of the whole assembly. Mordaunt's suspicions were strongly awakened by what he observed, for he knew Minna's character well, and with what equanimity and indifference she was in the custom of receiving the usual compliments and gallantries

with which her beauty and her situation rendered her sufficiently familiar.

"Can it be possible she really loves this stranger?" was the unpleasant thought that instantly shot across Mordaunt's mind;—"And if she does, what is my interest in the matter?" was the second; and which was quickly followed by the reflection, that, though he claimed no interest at any time but as a friend, and though that interest was now withdrawn, he was still, in consideration of their former intimacy, entitled both to be sorry and angry at her for throwing away her affections on one he judged unworthy of her. In this process of reasoning, it is probable that a little mortified vanity, or some indescribable shade of selfish regret, might be endeavouring to assume the disguise of disinterested generosity; but there is so much of base alloy in our very best (unassisted) thoughts, that it is melancholy work to criticize too closely the motives of our most worthy actions; at least we would recommend to every one to let those of his neighbours pass current, however narrowly he may examine the purity of his own.

The sword-dance was succeeded by various other specimens of the same exercise, and by songs, to which the singers lent their whole soul, while the audience were sure, as occasion offered, to unite in some favourite chorus. It is upon such occasions that music, though of a simple and even of a rude character, finds its natural empire over the general bosom, and produces that strong excitement which cannot be attained by the most learned compositions of the first masters, which are caviare to the common ear, although, doubtless, they afford a delight, exquisite in its kind, to those whose natural capacity and education have enabled them to comprehend and relish those difficult and complicated combinations of harmony.

It was about midnight when a knocking at the door of the mansion, with the sound of the *Gue* and the *Langspiel*, announced, by their tinkling chime, the arrival of fresh revellers, to whom, according to the hospitable custom of the country, the apartments were instantly thrown open.

CHAPTER III.

——My mind misgives,
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels.

Romeo and Juliet.

THE new comers were, according to the frequent custom of such frolickers all over the world, disguised in a sort of masking habits, and designed to represent the Tritons and Mermaids, with whom ancient tradition and popular belief has peopled the northern seas. The former, called by Zetlanders of that time, Shoupeltins, were represented by young men grotesquely habited, with false hair and beards, made of flax, and chaplets composed of sea-ware interwoven with shells, and other marine productions; with which also were decorated their light-blue or greenish mantles of wadmaal, a coarse cloth of domestic manufacture. They had fish-spears, and other

emblems of their assumed quality, amongst which the classical taste of Claud Halcro, by whom the mask was arranged, had not forgotten the conch-shells, which were stoutly and hoarsely winded, from time to time, by one or two of the aquatic deities, to the great annoyance of all who stood near them.

The Nereids and Water-nymphs who attended on this occasion, displayed, as usual, a little more taste for dress and ornament than was to be seen amongst their male attendants. Fantastic garments of green silk, and other materials of superior cost and fashion, had been contrived, so as to imitate their idea of the inhabitants of the waters, and, at the same time, to shew the shape and features of the fair wearers to the best advantage. The bracelets of shells, which adorned the neck, arms, and ancles of the pretty Mermaidens, were, in some cases, intermixed with real pearl; and the appearance, upon the whole, was such as might have done no discredit to the court of Amphitrite, especially when the long bright locks, blue eyes, fair complexions, and pleasing features of the maidens of Thule were taken into considera-

tion. We do not indeed pretend to aver, that any of these seeming Mermaids had so accurately imitated the real syren, as commentators have supposed those attendant on Cleopatra did, who, adopting the fish's train of their original, were able, nevertheless, to make their "bends," or "ends," (said commentators cannot tell which,) "adornings." * Indeed, had they not left their extremities in their natural state, it would have been impossible for the Zetland syrens to have executed the very pretty dance with which they rewarded the company, for the ready admission which had been granted to them.

It was soon discovered, that these maskers were no strangers, but a part of the company, who, stealing out a little time before, had thus disguised themselves, in order to give variety to the mirth of the evening. The muse of Claud Halcro, always active on such occasions, had supplied them with an appropriate song, of which we may give the following specimen. The song

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* See some admirable discussion on this passage, in the Variorum Shakespeare.

was alternate betwixt a Nereid or Mermaid, and a Merman or Triton—the males and females on either part forming a semi-chorus, which accompanied and bore burthen to the principal singer.

I.

MERMAID.

Fathoms deep beneath the wave,
  Stringing beads of glistering pearl,
Singing the achievements brave
  Of many an old Norwegian earl;
Dwelling where the tempest's raving
  Falls as light upon our ear,
As the sigh of lover, craving
  Pity from his lady dear,
Children of wild Thule, we,
From the deep caves of the sea,
As the lark springs from the lea,
Hither come, to share your glee.

II.

MERMAN.

From reining of the water-horse,
  That bounded till the waves were foaming,
Watching the infant tempest's course,
  Chasing the sea-snake in his roaming;

From winding charge-notes on the shell,
  When the huge whale and sword-fish duel,
Or tolling shroudless seamen's knell,
  When the winds and waves are cruel;
Children of wild Thule, we
Have plough'd such furrows on the sea,
As the steer draws on the lea,
And hither we come to share your glee.

III.

MERMAIDS AND MERMEN.

We heard you in our twilight caves,
  A hundred fathom deep below,
For notes of joy can pierce the waves,
  That drown each sound of war and woe.
Those who dwell beneath the sea
  Love the sons of Thule well;
Thus to aid your mirth, bring we
  Dance, and song, and sounding shell.
Children of dark Thule, know,
Those who dwell by haaf and voe,
Where your daring shallops row,
Come to share the festal show.

The final chorus was borne by the whole voices, excepting those carrying the conch-shells, who had been trained to blow them in a sort of rude

accompaniment, which had a good effect. The poetry, as well as the performance of the maskers, received great applause from all who pretended to be judges of such matters; but above all, from Triptolemus Yellowley, who, his ear having caught the agricultural sounds of plough and furrow, and his brain being so well drenched, that it could only construe the words in their most literal acceptation, declared roundly, and called Mordaunt to bear witness, that though it was a shame to waste as much good lint as went to form the Tritons' beards and periwigs, that the song contained the only words of common sense which he had heard all that long day.

But Mordaunt had no time to answer the appeal, being engaged in attending with the utmost vigilance to the motions of one of the female maskers, who had given him a private signal as they entered, which induced him, though uncertain who she might prove to be, to expect some communication from her of importance. The syren who had so boldly touched his arm, and had accompanied the gesture with an expression of eye which bespoke his attention, was dis-

guised with a good deal more care than her sister-maskers, her mantle being loose, and wide enough to conceal her shape completely, and her face hidden beneath a silk mask. He observed that she gradually detached herself from the rest of the maskers, and at length placed herself, as if for the advantage of the air, near the door of a chamber which remained open, looked earnestly at him again, and then taking an opportunity, when the attention of the company was fixed upon the rest of her party, she left the apartment.

Mordaunt did not hesitate instantly to follow his mysterious guide, for such we may term the masker, as she paused to let him see the direction she was about to take, and then walked swiftly towards the shore of the *voe* or salt-water lake, now lying full before them, its small summer-waves glistening and rippling under the influence of a broad moonlight, which, added to the strong twilight of these regions during the summer solstice, left no reason to regret the absence of the sun, the path of whose setting was still visible on the waves of the west, while the

horizon on the east side was already beginning to glimmer with the lights of dawn.

Mordaunt had therefore no difficulty in keeping sight of his disguised guide, as she tripped it over height and hollow to the sea-side, and, winding among the rocks, led the way to the spot where his own labours, during the time of his former intimacy at Burgh Westra, had constructed a sheltered and solitary seat, where the daughters of Magnus were accustomed to spend, when the weather was suitable, a good deal of their time. Here, then, was to be the place of explanation; for the masker stopped, and after a moment's hesitation, sat down on the rustic settle. But, from the lips of whom was he to receive it? Norna had first occurred to him; but her tall figure and slow majestic step were entirely different from the size and gait of the more fairy-formed syren, who had preceded him with as light a step as if she had been a real Nereid, who, having remained too late upon the shore, was, under the dread of Amphitrite's displeasure, hastening to regain her native element. Since it was

not Norna, it could be only, he thought, Brenda, who thus singled him out; and when she had seated herself upon the bench, and taken the mask from her face, Brenda it accordingly proved to be. Mordaunt had certainly done nothing to make him dread her presence; and yet, such is the influence of bashfulness over the ingenuous youth of both sexes, that he experienced all the embarrassment of one who finds himself unexpectedly placed before a person who is justly offended with him. Brenda felt no less embarrassment; but as she had courted this interview, and was sensible it must be a brief one, she was compelled, in spite of herself, to begin the conversation.

"Mordaunt," she said, with a hesitating voice; then correcting herself, she proceeded—"You must be surprised, Mr Mertoun, that I should have taken this uncommon freedom."

"It was not till this morning, Brenda," replied Mordaunt, "that any mark of friendship or intimacy from you or from your sister could have surprised me. I am far more astonished that you should shun me without reason for so many

hours, than that you should now allow me an interview. In the name of Heaven, Brenda, in what have I offended you? or why are we on these unusual terms?"

"May it not be enough to say," replied Brenda, looking downward, "that it is my father's pleasure?"

"No, it is not enough," returned Mertoun. "Your father cannot have so suddenly altered his whole thoughts of me, and his whole actions towards me, without acting under the influence of some strong delusion. I ask you but to explain of what nature it is; for I will be contented to be lower in your esteem than the meanest hind in these islands, if I cannot shew that his change of opinion is only grounded upon some infamous deception, or some extraordinary mistake."

"It may be so," said Brenda—"I hope it is so—that I do hope it is so, my desire to see you thus in private may well prove to you. But it is difficult—in short, it is impossible for me to explain to you the cause of my father's resentment. Norna has spoken with him concerning it boldly,

and I fear they parted in displeasure; and you well know no light matter could cause that."

"I have observed," said Mordaunt, "that your father is most attentive to Norna's counsel, and more complaisant to her peculiarities than to those of others—this I have observed, though he is no willing believer in the supernatural qualities to which she lays claim."

"They are related distantly," answered Brenda, "and were friends in youth—nay, as I have heard, it was once supposed they would have been married; but Norna's peculiarities shewed themselves immediately on her father's death, and there was an end of that matter, if ever there was any thing in it. But it is certain my father regards her with much interest; and it is, I fear, a sign how deeply his prejudices respecting you must be rooted, since they have in some degree quarrelled on your account."

"Now, blessings upon you, Brenda, that you have called them prejudices," said Mertoun, warmly and hastily—"a thousand blessings on you! You were ever gentle-hearted—you could

not have maintained even the shew of unkindness long."

"It was indeed but a shew," said Brenda, softening gradually into the familiar tone in which they had conversed from infancy; "I could never think, Mordaunt,—never, that is, seriously believe, that you could say aught unkind of Minna or of me."

"And who dares to say I have?" said Mordaunt, giving way to the natural impetuosity of his disposition—"Who dares to say that I have, and ventures at the same time to hope that I will suffer his tongue to remain in safety betwixt his jaws? By Saint Magnus the Martyr, I will feed the hawks with it!"

"Nay, now," said Brenda, "your anger only terrifies me, and will force me to leave you."

"Leave me," said he, "without telling me either the calumny, or the name of the villainous calumniator!"

"O, there are more than one," answered Brenda, "that have possessed my father with an opinion—which I cannot myself tell you—but there are more than one who say——"

"Were they hundreds, Brenda, I will do no less to them than I have said—Sacred martyr!—to accuse me of speaking unkindly of those whom I most respected and valued under Heaven—I will back to the apartment this instant, and your father shall do me right before all the world."

"Do not go, for the love of Heaven!" said Brenda; "do not go, as you would not render me the most unhappy wretch in the world."

"Tell me then, at least, if I guess aright," said Mordaunt, "when I name this Cleveland for one of those who have slandered me?"

"No, no," said Brenda, vehemently, "you run from one error into another more dangerous. You say you are my friend;—I am willing to be yours:—be but still for a moment, and hear what I have to say;—our interview has lasted but too long already, and every additional moment brings additional danger with it."

"Tell me then," said Mertoun, much softened by the poor girl's extreme apprehension and distress, "what it is that you require of me, and, believe me, it is impossible for you to ask aught that I will not do my very uttermost to comply with."

"Well then,—this Captain," said Brenda, "this Cleveland——"

"I knew it, by Heaven!" said Mordaunt; "my mind assured me that that fellow was, in one way or other, at the bottom of all this mischief and misunderstanding."

"If you cannot be silent, and patient, for an instant," replied Brenda, "I must instantly quit you; what I meant to say had no relation to you, but to another,—in one word, to my sister Minna. I have nothing to say concerning her dislike to you, but an anxious tale to tell concerning his attention to her."

"It is obvious, striking, and marked," said Mordaunt; "and, unless my eyes deceive me, it is received as welcome, if, indeed, it is not returned."

"That is the very cause of my fear," said Brenda. "I, too, was struck with the external appearance, frank manners, and romantic conversation of this man."

"His appearance!" said Mordaunt; "he is stout and well-featured enough, to be sure; but, as old Sinclair of Quendale said to the Spanish

admiral, 'Farcie on his face! I have seen many a fairer hang on the Borough-moor.'—By his manners, he might be captain of a privateer; and by his conversation, the trumpeter to his own puppet-show; for he speaks of little else than his own exploits."

"You are mistaken," answered Brenda; "he speaks but too well on all that he has seen and learned; besides, he has really been in many distant countries, and in many gallant actions, and he can tell them with as much spirit as modesty. You would think you saw the flash and heard the report of the guns. And he has other tones of talking too—about the delightful trees and fruits of distant climates; and how the people wear no dress, through the whole year, half so warm as our summer gowns, and, indeed, put on little save cambrics and muslins."

"Upon my word, Brenda, he does seem to understand the business of amusing young ladies," replied Mordaunt.

"He does indeed," said Brenda, with great simplicity. "I assure you that, at first, I liked him better than Minna did; and yet, though

she is so much cleverer than me, I know more of the world than she does; for I have seen more of cities, having been once at Kirkwall; besides that I was thrice at Lerwick, when the Dutch ships were there, and so I should not be very easily deceived in people."

"And pray, Brenda," said Mertoun, "what was it that made you think less favourably of this young fellow, who seems to be so captivating?"

"Why, at first," said Brenda, after a moment's reflection, "he was much livelier; and the stories he told were not quite so melancholy, or so terrible; and he laughed and danced more."

"And, perhaps, at that time, danced oftener with Brenda than with her sister?" added Mordaunt.

"No,—I am not sure of that," said Brenda; "and yet, to speak plain, I could have no suspicion of him at all while he was attending quite equally to us both; for you know that then he could have been no more to us than yourself, Mordaunt Mertoun, or young Swaraster, or any other young man in the islands."

"But, why then," said Mordaunt, "should

you not see him, with patience, become acquainted with your sister?—He is wealthy, or seems to be so at least. You say he is accomplished and pleasant;—what else would you desire in a lover for Minna?"

"Mordaunt, you forget who we are," said the maiden, assuming an air of consequence, which sat as gracefully upon her simplicity, as did the different tone in which she had spoken hitherto; "this is a little world of ours this Zetland, and perhaps inferior, at least so strangers say, to other parts of the earth; but it is our own little world, and we, the daughters of Magnus Troil, hold a first rank in it. It would, I think, little become us, who are descended from Sea-kings and Jarls, to throw ourselves away upon a stranger, who comes to our coast, like the eider-duck in spring, from we know not whence, and may leave it, in autumn, to go we know not where."

"And who may ne'ertheless entice a Zetland golden-eye to accompany his migration," said Mertoun.

"I will hear nothing light on such a subject," replied Brenda, indignantly; "Minna, like my-

self, is the daughter of Magnus Troil, the friend of strangers, but the Father of Hialtland. He gives them the hospitality they need; but let not the proudest of them think that they can, at their pleasure, ally with his house."

She said this in a tone of considerable warmth, which she instantly softened, as she added, "No, Mordaunt, do not suppose that Minna Troil is capable of so far forgetting what she owes to her father and her father's blood, as to think of marrying this Cleveland; but she may lend an ear to him so long as to destroy her future happiness. She has that sort of mind, into which some feelings sink deeply;—you remember how Ulla Storlson used to go, day by day, to the top of Vossdale-head, to look for her lover's ship that was never to return? When I think of her slow step, her pale cheek, her eye, that grew dimmer and dimmer, like the lamp that is half extinguished for lack of oil,—when I remember the fluttered look, of something like hope, with which she ascended the cliff at morning, and the deep dead despair which sat on her forehead when she returned,—when I think on all this, can you won-

der that I fear for Minna, whose heart is formed to entertain, with such deep-rooted fidelity, any affection that may be implanted in it?"

"I do not wonder," said Mordaunt, eagerly sympathizing with the poor girl; for, besides the tremulous expression of her voice, the light could almost shew him the tear which trembled in her eye, as she drew the picture to which her fancy had assimilated her sister,—"I do not wonder that you should feel and fear whatever the purest affection can dictate; and if you can but point out to me in what I can serve your sisterly love, you shall find me as ready to venture my life, if necessary, as I have been to go out on the craig to get you the eggs of the guillemot; and, believe me, that whatever has been told to your father or yourself, of my entertaining the slightest thoughts of disrespect or unkindness, is as false as a fiend could devise."

"I believe it," said Brenda, giving him her hand; "I believe it, and my bosom is lighter, now I have renewed my confidence in so old a friend. How you can aid us, I know not; but it was by the advice, I may say by the commands,

of Norna, that I have ventured to make this communication; and I almost wonder," she added, as she looked around her, "that I have had courage to carry me through it. At present you know all that I can tell you of the risk in which my sister stands. Look after this Cleveland—beware how you quarrel with him, since you must so surely come by the worst with an experienced soldier."

"I do not exactly understand," said the youth, "how that should so surely be. This I know, that with the good limbs and good heart that God has given me, ay, and with a good cause to boot—I am little afraid of any quarrel which Cleveland can fix upon me."

"Then, if not for your own sake, for Minna's sake," said Brenda—"for my father's—for mine—for all our sakes, avoid any strife with him; but be contented to watch him, and if possible to discover who he is, and what are his intentions towards us. He has talked of going to Orkney, to inquire after the consort with whom he sailed; but day by day, and week by week passes, and he goes not; and while he keeps

my father company over the bottle, and tells Minna romantic stories of foreign people, and distant wars, in wild and unknown regions, the time glides on, and the stranger, of whom we know nothing, save that he is one, becomes gradually closer and more inseparably intimate in our society.—And now farewell. Norna hopes to make your peace with my father, and entreats you not to leave Burgh Westra to-morrow, however cold my father and my sister may appear towards you. I too," she said, stretching her hand towards him, " must wear a face of cold friendship towards the unwelcome visitor, but at heart we are still Brenda and Mordaunt. And now separate quickly, we must not be seen together."

She stretched her hand to him, but withdrew it in some slight confusion, laughing and blushing, when, by a natural impulse, he was about to press it to his lips. He endeavoured for a moment to detain her, for the interview had for him a degree of fascination, which, as often as he had formerly been alone with Brenda, he had never experienced. But she extricated herself from

him, and again signing an adieu, and pointing out to him a path different from that which she was herself about to take, tripped towards the house, and was soon hidden from his view by the acclivity.

Mordaunt stood gazing after her in a state of mind, to which, as yet, he had been a stranger. The dubious neutral ground between love and friendship may be long and safely trodden, until he who stands upon it is suddenly called upon to recognize the authority of the one or the other power; and then it most frequently happens, that he who for years supposed himself only to be a friend, finds himself at once transformed into a lover. That such a change in Mordaunt's feelings should take place from this date, although he himself was unable exactly to distinguish its nature, was to be expected. He found himself at once received, with the most unsuspicious frankness, into the confidence of a beautiful and fascinating young woman, by whom he had, so short a time before, imagined himself despised and disliked; and, if any thing could make a change,

in itself so surprising and so pleasing, yet more intoxicating, it was the guileless and open-hearted simplicity of Brenda, that cast an enchantment over every thing which she did or said. The scene, too, might have had its effects, though there was little occasion for its aid. But a fair face looks yet fairer under the light of the moon, and a sweet voice sounds yet sweeter amongst the whispering sounds of a summer night. Mordaunt, therefore, who was by this time returned to the house, was disposed to listen with unusual patience and complacency to the enthusiastic declamation pronounced upon moonlight by Claud Halcro, whose ecstacies had been awakened on the subject by a short turn in the open air, undertaken to qualify the vapours of the good liquor, which he had not spared during the festival.

"The sun, my boy," he said, "is every wretched labourer's day-lantern—it comes glaring yonder, out of the east, to summon up a whole world to labour and to misery; whereas the merry moon lights all of us to mirth and to love."

"And to madness, or she is much belied," said Mordaunt, by way of saying something.

"Let it be so," answered Halcro, "so she does not turn us melancholy mad. My dear young friend, the folks of this pains-taking world are far too anxious about possessing all their wits, or having them, as they say, about them. At least I know I have been often called half-witted, and I am sure I have gone through the world as well as if I had double the quantity. But stop—where was I? O, touching and concerning the moon—why, man, she is the very soul of love and poetry. I question if there was ever a true lover in existence who had not got at least as far as 'O thou,' in a sonnet in her praise."

"The moon," said the factor, who was now beginning to speak very thick, "ripens corn, at least the old folk said so—and she fills nuts also, whilk is of less matter—*sparge nuces, pueri.*"

"A fine, a fine," said the Udaller, who was now in his altitudes; "the factor speaks Greek—by the bones of my holy name-sake, Saint Magnus, he shall drink off the yawl full of punch, unless he gives us a song on the spot!"

"Too much water drowned the miller," answered Triptolemus. "My brain has more

need of draining than of being drenched with more liquor."

"Sing then," said the despotic landlord, "for no one shall speak any other language here, save honest Norse, jolly Dutch, or Danske, or broad Scots, at the least of it. So, Eric Scambester, produce the yawl, and fill it to the brim, as a charge for demurrage."

Ere the vessel could reach the agriculturist, he, who saw it under way, and steering towards him by short tacks, (for Scambester himself was by this time not over steady in his course,) made a desperate effort, and began to sing, or rather to croak forth a Yorkshire harvest-home ballad, which his father used to sing when he was a little mellow, and which went to the tune of "Hey Dobbin, away with the waggon." The rueful aspect of the singer, and the desperately discordant tones of his voice, formed so delightful a contrast with the jollity of the words and tune, that honest Triptolemus afforded the same sort of amusement which a reveller might give, by appearing on a festival-day in the holiday coat of his grandfather. The jest concluded the even-

ing, for even the mighty and strong-headed Magnus himself had confessed the influence of the sleepy god. The guests went off as best they might, each to his separate crib and resting-place, and in a short time the mansion, which was of late so noisy, was hushed into perfect silence.

CHAPTER IV.

They man their boats, and all the young men arm,
With whatsoever might the monsters harm;
Pikes, halberts, spits, and darts that wound afar,
The tools of peace, and implements of war.
Now was the time for vigorous lads to shew
What love or honour could incite them to;—
A goodly theatre, where rocks are round
With reverend age and lovely lasses crown'd.

Battle of the Summer Islands.

THE morning which succeeds such a feast as that of Magnus Troil, usually lacks a little of the zest which seasoned the revels of the preceding day, as the fashionable reader may have observed at a public breakfast during the race-week in a country town; for, in what is called the best society, these lingering moments are usually spent by the company, each apart in their own dressing-rooms. At Burgh-Westra, it will readily be believed, no such space for retire-

ment was afforded; and the lasses, with their paler cheeks, the elder dames, with many a wink and yawn, were compelled to meet with the men, (headachs and all,) just three hours after they had parted from each other.

Eric Scambester had done all that man could do to supply the full means of diverting the ennui of the morning meal. The board groaned with rounds of hung beef, made after the fashion of Zetland—with pasties—with baked meats—with fish dressed and cured in all possible manners; nay, with the foreign delicacies of tea, coffee, and chocolate; for, as we have already had occasion to remark, the situation of these islands made them early acquainted with various articles of foreign luxury, which were, as yet, but little known in Scotland, where, at a much later period than that we write of, one pound of green tea was dressed like cabbage, and another converted into a vegetable sauce for salt beef, by the ignorance of the good housewives to whom they had been sent as rare presents.

Besides these preparations, the table exhibited whatever mighty potions are resorted to by *bons*

vivans, under the facetious name of a "hair of the dog that bit you." There was the potent Irish Usquebaugh—right Nantz—genuine Schiedamm—Aquavitæ from Caithness—and Golden Wasser from Hamburgh; there was rum of formidable antiquity, and cordials from the Leeward Islands. After these details, it were needless to mention the stout home-brewed ale—the German mum, and Schwartz beer—and still more would it be beneath our dignity to dwell upon the innumerable sorts of pottage and flummery, together with the bland, and various preparations of milk, for those who preferred thinner potations.

No wonder that the sight of so much good cheer awakened the appetite and raised the spirits of the fatigued revellers. The young men began immediately to seek out their partners of the preceding evening, and to renew the small talk which had driven the night so merrily away; while Magnus, with his stout old Norse kindred, encouraged, by precept and example, those of elder days and graver mood, to a substantial flirtation with the good things before them. Still, however, there was a long period to be filled up

before dinner; for the most protracted breakfast cannot well last above an hour; and it was to be feared that Claud Halcro meditated the occupation of this vacant morning with a formidable recitation of his own verses, besides telling, at its full length, the whole history of his introduction to glorious John Dryden. But fortune relieved the guests of Burgh-Westra from this threatened infliction, by sending them means of amusement peculiarly suited to their taste and habits.

Most of the guests were using their toothpick, some were beginning to talk of what was to be done next, when, with haste in his step, and fire in his eye, Eric Scambester, a harpoon in his hand, came to announce to the company, that there was a whale on shore, or nearly so, at the throat of the voe. Then you might have seen such a joyous, boisterous, and universal bustle, as only the love of sport, so deeply implanted in our natures, can possibly inspire. A set of country squires, about to beat for the first woodcocks of the season, were a comparison as petty, in respect to the glee, as in regard to the importance

of the object; the battue, upon a strong cover in Ettrick-forest, for the destruction of the foxes; the insurrection of the sportsmen of the Lennox, when one of the duke's deer gets out from Inch-Mirran; nay, the joyous rally of the fox-chase itself, with all its blithe accompaniments of hound and horn, fall infinitely short of the animation with which the gallant sons of Thule set off to encounter the monster, whom the sea had sent for their amusement at so opportune a conjuncture.

The multifarious stores of Burgh Westra were rummaged hastily for all sorts of arms, which could be used on such an occasion. Harpoons, swords, pikes, and halberts, fell to the lot of some; others contented themselves with hay-forks, spits, and whatever else could be found, that was at once long and sharp. Thus hastily equipped, one division under the command of Captain Cleveland, hastened to man the boats which lay in the little haven, while the rest of the party hurried by land to the scene of action.

Poor Triptolemus was interrupted in a plan, which he, too, had formed against the patience

of the Zetlanders, and which was to have consisted in a lecture upon the agriculture, and the capabilities of the country, by this sudden hubbub, which put an end at once to Halcro's poetry, and to his no less formidable prose. It may be easily imagined, that he took very little interest in the sport which was so suddenly substituted for his lucubrations, and he would not even have deigned to have looked upon the active scene which was about to take place, had he not been stimulated thereunto by the exhortations of Mistress Baby. "Pit yoursell forward, man," said that provident person, "pit yoursell forward—wha kens whare a blessing may light?—they say that a' men share and share equals-aquals in the creature's ulzie, and a pint o't wad be worth siller, to light the cruise in the lang dark nights that they speak of—pit yoursell forward, man—there's a graip to ye—faint heart never wan fair lady—wha kens but what when it's fresh, it may eat weel enough, and spare butter?"

What zeal was added to Triptolemus's motions, by the prospect of eating fresh train-oil,

instead of butter, we know not; but, as better might not be, he brandished the rural implement (a stable-fork) with which he was armed, and went down to wage battle with the whale.

The situation in which the enemy's ill fate had placed him, was particularly favourable to the enterprize of the islanders. A tide of unusual height, had carried the animal over a large bar of sand, into the voe or creek in which he was now lying. So soon as he found the water ebbing, he became sensible of his danger, and had made desperate efforts to get over the shallow water, where the waves broke on the bar; but hitherto he had rather injured than mended his condition, having got himself partly aground, and lying therefore particularly exposed to the meditated attack. At this moment the enemy came down upon him. The front ranks consisted of the young and hardy, armed in the miscellaneous manner we have described; while, to witness and animate their efforts, the young women, and the elderly persons of both sexes, took their place among the rocks, which overhung the scene of action.

As the boats had to double a little headland, ere they opened the mouth of the voe, those who came by land to the shores of the inlet, had time to make the necessary reconnoissances upon the force and situation of the enemy, on whom they were about to commence a simultaneous attack by land and sea.

This duty, the stout-hearted and experienced general would entrust to no eyes but his own; and, indeed, his external appearance, and his sage conduct, rendered him alike qualified for the command which he enjoyed. His gold-laced hat was exchanged for a bear-skin cap, his suit of blue broad-cloth, with its scarlet lining, and loops, and frogs of bullion, had given place to a red flannel jacket, with buttons of black horn, over which he wore a seal-skin shirt, curiously seamed and plaited on the bosom, such as are used by the Esquimaux, and sometimes by the Greenland whale-fishers. Sea-boots of a formidable size completed his dress, and, in his hand, he held a huge whaling-knife, which he brandished, as if impatient to employ it in the operation of *flinching* the huge animal which lay before them,

the act of separating, that is, its flesh from its bones. Upon closer examination, however, he was obliged to confess, that the sport to which he had conducted his friends, however much it corresponded with the magnificent scale of his hospitality, was likely to be attended with its own peculiar dangers and difficulties.

The animal, upwards of sixty feet in length, was lying perfectly still, in a deep part of the voe into which it had weltered, and where it seemed to await the return of tide, of which it was probably assured by instinct. A council of experienced harpooners was instantly called, and it was agreed that an effort should be made to noose the tail of this torpid leviathan, by casting a cable around it, to be made fast by anchors to the shore, and thus to secure against his escape, in case the tide should make before they were able to dispatch him. Three boats were destined to this delicate piece of service, one of which the Udaller himself proposed to command, while Cleveland and Mertoun were to direct the two others. This being decided, they sat down on the strand, waiting with impatience, until the

naval part of the force should arrive in the voe. It was during this interval, that Triptolemus Yellowley, after measuring with his eyes the extraordinary size of the whale, observed, that in his poor mind, "A wain with six owsen, or with sixty owsen either, if they were the owsen of the country, could not drag siccan a huge creature from the water, where it was now lying, to the sea-beach."

Trifling as this remark may seem to the reader, it was connected with a subject which always fired the blood of the old Udaller, who, glancing upon Triptolemus a quick and stern look, asked him what the devil it signified, supposing a hundred oxen could not drag the whale upon the beach? Mr Yellowley, though not much liking the tone with which the question was put, felt that his dignity and his profit compelled him to answer as follows:—"Nay, sir—you know yoursell, Master Magnus Troil, and every one knows that knows any thing, that whales of siccan size as may not be masterfully dragged on shore by the instrumentality of one wain with six owsen, are the right and property of the admi-

ral, who is at this time the same noble lord who is, moreover, chamberlain of these isles."

"And I tell you, Mr Triptolemus Yellowley," said the Udaller, "as I would tell your master if he were here, that every man who risks his life to bring that fish ashore, shall have an equal share and partition, according to our ancient and loveable Norse custom and wont; nay, if there is so much as a woman looking on, that will but touch the cable, she shall be partner with us; ay, and more than all that, if she will but say there is reason for it, we will assign a portion to the babe that is unborn."

The strict principle of equity, which dictated this last arrangement, occasioned laughter among the men, and some slight confusion amongst the women. The factor, however, thought it shame to be so easily daunted,—"*Suum cuique tribuito*," said he; "I will stand for my lord's right and my own."

"Will you?" replied Magnus; "then, by the Martyr's bones, you shall have no law of partition but that of God and Saint Olave, which we had before either factor, or treasurer, or ad-

miral, were heard of—All shall share that lend a hand, and never a one else.—So you, Master Factor, shall be busy as well as other folks, and think yourself lucky to share like other folks. Jump into that boat, (for the boats had by this time pulled round the headland,) and you, my lads, make way for the factor in the stern-sheets—he shall be the first man this blessed day that shall strike the fish."

The loud authoritative voice, and the habit of absolute command inferred in the Udaller's whole manner, together with the conscious want of favourers and backers amongst the rest of the company, rendered it difficult for Triptolemus to evade compliance, although he was thus about to be placed in a situation equally novel and perilous. He was still, however, hesitating, and attempting an explanation with a voice in which anger was qualified by fear, and both thinly disguised under an attempt to be jocular, and to represent the whole as a jest, when he heard the voice of Baby maundering in his ear,—" Wad he lose his share of the ulzie, and the lang Zetland winter coming

on, when the lightest day in December is not so clear as a moonless night in the Mearns?"

This domestic instigation, in addition to those of fear of the Udaller, and shame to seem less courageous than others, so inflamed the agriculturist's spirits, that he shook his *graip* aloft, and entered the boat with the air of Neptune himself, carrying on high his trident.

The three boats destined for this perilous service, now approached the dark mass, which lay like an islet, in the deepest part of the voe, and suffered them to approach, without shewing any sign of animation. Silently, and with such precaution as the extreme delicacy of the operation required, the intrepid adventurers, after the failure of their first attempt, and the expenditure of considerable time, succeeded in casting a cable around the body of the torpid monster, and in carrying the ends of it ashore, where an hundred hands were instantly employed in securing them. But ere this was accomplished, the tide began to make fast, and the Udaller informed his assistants, that either the fish must be killed, or at

least greatly wounded, ere the depth of water on the bar was sufficient to float him; or that he was not unlikely to escape from their joint prowess.

"Wherefore," said he, "we must set to work, and the factor shall have the honour to make the first throw."

The valiant Triptolemus caught the word; and it is necessary to say that the patience of the whale, in suffering himself to be noosed without resistance, had abated his terrors, and very much lowered the creature in his opinion. He protested the fish had no more wit, and scarcely more activity, than a black snail; and, influenced by this undue contempt of the adversary, he waited neither for a further signal, nor a better weapon, nor a more suitable position, but, rising in his energy, hurled his graip with all his force against the unfortunate monster. The boats had not yet retreated from him, to the distance necessary to ensure safety, when this injudicious commencement of the war took place.

Magnus Troil, who had only jested with the factor, and had reserved the launching the first

spear against the whale to some much more skilful hand, had just time to exclaim, "Mind yourselves, lads, or we are all swamped," when the monster, roused at once from inactivity by the blow of the factor's missile, blew, with a noise resembling the explosion of a steam-engine, a huge shower of water into the air, and at the same time began to lash the waves with its tail in every direction. The boat in which Magnus presided received the shower of brine which the animal spouted into the air; and the adventurous Triptolemus, who had a full share of the immersion, was so much astonished and terrified by the consequences of his own valorous deed, that he tumbled backwards amongst the feet of the people, who, too busy to attend to him, were actively engaged in getting the boat into shoal water, out of the whale's reach. Here he lay for some minutes, trampled on by the feet of the boatmen, until they lay on their oars to bale, when the Udaller ordered them to pull to shore, and land this spare hand, who had commenced the fishing so inauspiciously.

While this was doing, the other boats had also

pulled off to safer distance, and now, from these as well as from the shore, the unfortunate native of the deep was overwhelmed by all kinds of missiles,—harpoons and spears flew against him on all sides—guns were fired, and each various means of annoyance plied which could excite him to exhaust his strength in useless rage. When the animal found that he was locked in by shallows on all sides, and became sensible, at the same time, of the strain of the cable on his body, the convulsive efforts which he made to escape, accompanied with sounds resembling deep and loud groans, would have moved the compassion of all but a practised whale-fisher. The repeated showers which he spouted into the air began now to be mingled with blood, and the waves which surrounded him assumed the same crimson appearance. Meantime the attempts of the assailants were redoubled; but Mordaunt Mertoun and Cleveland, in particular, exerted themselves to the uttermost, contending who should display most courage in approaching the monster, so tremendous in its agonies, and should inflict the most deep and deadly wound upon its huge bulk.

The contest seemed at last pretty well over; for although the animal continued from time to time to make frantic exertions for liberty, yet its strength appeared so much exhausted, that, even with assistance of the tide, which had now risen considerably, it was thought it could scarce extricate itself.

Magnus gave the signal to venture upon the whale more nearly, calling out at the same time, "Close in, lads, she is not half so mad now—Now, Mr Factor, look for a winter's oil for the two lamps at Harfra—Pull close in, lads."

Ere his orders could be obeyed, the other two boats had anticipated his purpose; and Mordaunt Mertoun, eager to distinguish himself above Cleveland, had, with the whole strength he possessed, plunged a half-pike into the body of the animal. But the leviathan, like a nation whose resources appear totally exhausted by previous losses and calamities, collected his whole remaining force for an effort, which proved at once desperate and successful. The wound last received, had probably reached through his external defences of blubber, and attained some

very sensitive part of the system, for he roared aloud, as he sent to the sky a mingled sheet of brine and blood, and snapping the strong cable like a twig, overset Mertoun's boat with a blow of his tail, shot himself, by a mighty effort, over the bar, upon which the tide had now risen considerably, and made out to sea, carrying with him a whole grove of the implements which had been planted in his body, and leaving behind him, on the waters, a dark red trace of his course.

"There goes to sea your cruise of oil, Master Yellowley," said Magnus, "and you must consume mutton suet, or go to bed in the dark."

"*Operam et oleum perdidi*," muttered Triptolemus; "but if they catch me whale-fishing again, I will consent that the fish shall swallow me as he did Jonah."

"But where is Mordaunt Mertoun all this while?" exclaimed Claud Halcro; and it was instantly perceived that the youth, who had been stunned when his boat was stove, was unable to swim to shore as the other sailors did, and now floated senseless upon the waves.

We have noticed the strange and inhuman prejudice which rendered the Zetlanders of that period unwilling to assist those whom they saw in the act of drowning, though that is the calamity to which the islanders are most frequently exposed. Three men, however, soared above this superstition. The first was Claud Halcro, who threw himself from a small rock headlong into the waves, forgetting, as he himself afterwards stated, that he could not swim; and if possessed of the harp of Arion, had no dolphins in attendance. The first plunge which the poet made in deep water, reminding him of these deficiencies, he was fain to cling to the rock from which he had dived, and was at length glad to regain the shore, at the expence of a ducking.

Magnus Troil, whose honest heart forgot his late coolness towards Mordaunt, when he saw the youth's danger, would instantly have brought him more effectual assistance, but Eric Scambester held him fast.

"Hout, sir—hout," exclaimed that faithful attendant—"Captain Cleveland has a grip of Mr Mordaunt—just let the twa strangers help

ilk other, and stand by the upshot. The light of the country is not to be quenched for the like of them. Bide still, sir, I say—Bredness Voe is not a bowl of punch, that a man can be fished out of like a toast with a long spoon."

This sage remonstrance would have been altogether lost upon Magnus, had he not observed that Cleveland had in fact jumped out of the boat, and swum to Mertoun's assistance, and was keeping him afloat till the boat came to the aid of both. So soon as the immediate danger which called so loudly for assistance was thus ended, the honest Udaller's desire to render aid terminated also; and recollecting the cause of offence which he had, or thought he had, against Mordaunt Mertoun, he shook off his butler's hold, and turning scornfully from the beach, called Eric an old fool for supposing that he cared whether the young fellow sank or swam.

Still, however, amid his assumed indifference, Magnus could not help peeping over the heads of the circle, which, surrounding Mordaunt so soon as he was brought on shore, were charitably employed in endeavouring to recal him to life;

and he was not able to attain the appearance of absolute unconcern, until the young man sat up on the beach, and shewed plainly that the accident had been attended with no material consequences. It was then first that, cursing the assistants for not giving the lad a glass of brandy, he walked sullenly away, as if totally unconcerned in his fate.

The women, always accurate in observing the tell-tale emotions of each other, failed not to remark, that when the sisters of Burgh-Westra saw Mordaunt immersed in the waves, Minna grew as pale as death, while Brenda uttered successive shrieks of terror. But though there were some nods, winks, and hints, that auld acquaintance were not easily forgot, it was, on the whole, candidly admitted, that less than such marks of interest could scarce have been expected, when they saw the companion of their early youth in the act of perishing before their eyes.

Whatever interest Mordaunt's condition excited while it seemed perilous, began to abate as he recovered himself; and when his senses were fully restored, only Claud Halcro, with two or

three others, were standing by him. About ten paces off stood Cleveland—his hair and clothes dropping water, and his features wearing so peculiar an expression, as immediately to arrest the attention of Mordaunt. There was a suppressed smile on his cheek, and a look of pride in his eye, that implied liberation from a painful restraint, and something resembling gratified scorn. Claud Halcro hastened to intimate to Mordaunt, that he owed his life to Cleveland; and the youth, rising from the ground, and losing all other feelings in those of gratitude, stepped forward with his hand stretched out, to offer his warmest thanks to his preserver. But he stopped short in surprise, as Cleveland, retreating a pace or two, folded his arms on his breast, and declined to accept his proffered hand. He drew back in turn, and gazed with astonishment at the ungracious manner, and almost insulting look, with which Cleveland, who had formerly rather expressed a frank cordiality, or at least, openness of bearing, now, after having thus rendered him a most important service, chose to receive his thanks.

"It is enough," said Cleveland, observing his surprise, "and it is unnecessary to say more about it. I have paid back my debt, and we are now equal."

"You are more than equal with me, Mr Cleveland," answered Mertoun, "because you endangered your life to do for me what I did for you without the slightest risk;—besides," he added, trying to give the discourse a more pleasant turn, "I have your rifle gun to boot."

"Cowards only count danger for any point of the game," said Cleveland. "Danger has been my consort for life, and sailed with me on a thousand worse voyages;—and for rifles, I have enough of my own, and you may see, when you will, which can use them best."

There was something in the tone with which this was said, that struck Mordaunt strongly; it was miching malicho, as Hamlet says, and meant mischief. Cleveland saw his surprise, came close up to him, and spoke in a low tone of voice:—"Hark ye, my young brother. There is a custom amongst us gentlemen of fortune, that when we follow the same chase, and take the wind out of

each other's sails, we think sixty yards of the sea-beach, and a brace of rifles, are no bad way of making our odds even."

"I do not understand you, Captain Cleveland," said Mordaunt.

"I do not suppose you do,—I did not suppose you would," said the Captain; and turning on his heel, with a smile that resembled a sneer, Mordaunt saw him mingle with the guests, and very soon beheld him at the side of Minna, who was talking to him with animated features that seemed to thank him for his gallant and generous conduct.

"If it were not for Brenda," thought Mordaunt, "I almost wish he had left me in the voe, for no one seems to care whether I am alive or dead.—Two rifles and sixty yards of sea-beach—is that what he points at?—it may come,—but not on the day he has saved my life with risk of his own."

While he was thus musing, Eric Scambester was whispering to Halcro, "If these two lads do not do each other a mischief, there is no faith in freits. Master Mordaunt saves Cleveland,—well.

—Cleveland, in requital, has turned all the sunshine of Burgh Westra to his own side of the house; and think what it is to lose favour in such a house as this, where the punch-kettle is never allowed to cool! Well, now that Cleveland in his turn has been such a fool as to fish Mordaunt out of the voe, see if he does not give him sour sillocks for stock-fish."

"Pshaw, pshaw!" replied the poet, "that is all old women's fancies, my friend Eric; for what says glorious Dryden—sainted John,—

> 'The yellow gall, that in your bosom floats,
> Engenders all these melancholy thoughts.'"

"Saint John, or Saint James either, may be mistaken in the matter," said Eric; "for I think neither of them lived in Zetland. I only say, that if there is faith in old saws, these two lads will do each other a mischief; and, if they do, I trust it will light on Mordaunt Mertoun."

"And why, Eric Scambester," said Halcro, hastily and angrily, "should you wish ill to that poor young man, that is worth fifty of the other?"

"Let every one roose the ford as he finds it," replied Eric; "Master Mordaunt is all for wan water, like his old dog-fish of a father; now Captain Cleveland takes his glass like an honest fellow and a gentleman."

"Rightly reasoned, and in thine own division," said Halcro; and breaking off their conversation, took his way back to Burgh Westra, to which the guests of Magnus were now returning, discussing as they went, with much animation, the various incidents of their attack upon the whale, and not a little scandalized that it should have baffled all their exertions.

"I hope Captain Donderdrecht of the Eintracht of Rotterdam will never hear of it," said Magnus; "he would swear, donner and blizstein, we were only fit to fish flounders."

CHAPTER V.

And helter-skelter have I rode to thee,
And tidings do I bring, and lucky joys,
And golden times, and happy news of price.
Ancient Pistol.

FORTUNE, who seems at times to bear a conscience, owed the hospitable Udaller some amends, and accordingly repaid to Burgh Westra the disappointment occasioned by the unsuccessful whale-fishing, by sending thither, on the evening of the day in which that incident happened, no less a person then the jagger, or travelling merchant, as he styled himself, Bryce Snaelsfoot, who arrived in great pomp, himself on one poney, and his pack of goods, swelled to nearly double its usual size, forming the burthen of another, which was led by a bare-headed bare-legged boy.

As Bryce announced himself the bearer of important news, he was introduced into the dining

apartment, where, (for that primitive age was no respecter of persons,) he was permitted to sit down at a side-table, and amply supplied with provisions and good liquor; while the attentive hospitality of Magnus permitted no questions to be put to him, until, his hunger and thirst appeased, he announced, with the sense of importance attached to distant travels, that he had just yesterday arrived at Lerwick from Kirkwall, the capital of Orkney, and would have been here yesterday, but it blew hard off the Fitful-head.

"We had no wind here," said Magnus.

"There is somebody has not been sleeping then," said the pedlar, "and her name begins with N; but Heaven is above all."

"But the news from Orkney, Bryce, instead of croaking about a capful of wind?"

"Such news," replied Bryce, "as has not been heard this thirty years—not since Cromwell's time."

"There is not another Revolution, is there?" said Halcro; "King James has not come back, as blithe King Charlie did, has he?"

"It's news," replied the pedlar, "that are

worth twenty kings, and kingdoms to boot of them; for what good did the evolutions ever do us? and I dare say we have seen a dozen, great and sma'."

"Are any Indiamen come north about?" said Magnus Troil.

"Ye are nearer the mark, Fowde," said the jagger; "but it is nae Indiaman, but a gallant armed vessel, choak-full of merchandize, that they part with so easy that a decent man like mysel can afford to give the country the best pennyworths you ever saw; and that you will say, when I open that pack, for I count to carry it back another sort lighter than when I brought it here."

"Ay, ay, Bryce," said the Udaller, "you must have had good bargains if you sell cheap; but what ship was it?"

"Cannot justly say—I spoke to nobody but the captain, who was a discreet man; but she had been down on the Spanish Main, for she has silks and sattins, and tobacco, I warrant you, and wine, and no lack of sugar, and bonnie wallies

baith of silver and gowd, and a bonnie dredging of gold dust into the bargain."

"What like was she?" said Cleveland, who seemed to give much attention.

"A stout ship," said the itinerant merchant, "schooner-rigged, sails like a dolphin they say, carries twelve guns, and is pierced for twenty."

"Did you hear the captain's name?" said Cleveland, speaking rather lower than his usual tone.

"I just ca'd him the Captain," replied Bryce Snaelsfoot; "for I make it a rule never to ask questions at them I deal with in the way of trade; for there is many an honest captain, begging your pardon, Captain Cleveland, that does not care to have his name tacked to his title; and as long as we ken what bargains we are making, what signifies it wha we are making them wi', ye ken."

"Bryce Snaelsfoot is a cautious man," said the Udaller, laughing; "he knows a fool may ask more questions than a wise man cares to answer."

"I have dealt with the fair traders in my day," replied Snaelsfoot, "and I ken nae use in blurting

braid out with a man's name at every moment; but I will uphold this gentleman to be a gallant commander—ay, and a kind one too; for every one of his crew is as brave in apparel as himself nearly—the very foremast-men have their silken scarfs, I have seen many a lady wear a warse, and think hersel nae sma' drink—and for siller buttons, and buckles, and the lave of sic vanities, there is nae end of them."

"Idiots!" muttered Cleveland between his teeth; and then added, "I suppose they are often ashore, to shew all their bravery to the lasses of Kirkwall?"

"Ne'er a bit of that are they. The Captain will scarce let them stir ashore without the boatswain go in the boat—as rough a tarpaulin as ever swab'd a deck—and you may as weel catch a cat without her claws, as him without his cutlass and his double brace of pistols about him; every man stands as much in awe of him as of the commander himsel."

"That must be Hawkins, or the devil," said Cleveland.

"Aweel, Captain," replied the jagger, "be he the tane or the tither, or a wee bit o' baith, mind it is you that give him these names, and not I."

"Why, Captain Cleveland," said the Udaller, "this may prove the very consort you spoke of."

"They must have had some good luck then, to put them in better plight than when I left them.—Did they speak of having lost their consort, pedlar?"

"In troth did they," said Bryce; "that is, they said something about a partner that had gone down to Davie Jones in these seas."

"And did you tell them what you knew of her?" said the Udaller.

"And wha the devil wad hae been the fule then?" said the pedlar, "that I suld say sae; when they kend what came of the ship, the next question wad have been about the cargo,—and ye wad not have had me bring down an armed vessel on the coast, to harrie the poor folk about a wheen rags of duds that the sea flung upon their shores?"

"Besides what might have been found in your own pack, you scoundrel!" said Magnus Troil,

an observation which produced a loud laugh. The Udaller could not help joining in the hilarity which applauded his own jest; but instantly composing his countenance, he said, in an unusually grave tone, "You may laugh, my friends; but this is a matter which brings both a curse and a shame on the country; and till we learn to regard the rights of them that suffer by the winds and waves, we shall deserve to be oppressed and hag-ridden, as we have been and are, by the superior strength of the strangers who rule us."

The company hung their heads at the rebuke of Magnus Troil. Perhaps some, even of the better class, might be conscience-struck on their own account; and all of them were sensible that the appetite for plunder, on the part of the tenants and inferiors, was not at all times restrained with sufficient strictness. But Cleveland made answer gaily, "If these honest fellows be my comrades, I will answer for them that they will never trouble the country about a parcel of chests, hammocks, and such trumpery, that the Roost may have washed ashore out of my poor sloop.

What signifies to them whether the trash went to Bryce Snaelsfoot, or to the bottom, or to the devil? So unbuckle thy pack, Bryce, and shew the ladies thy cargo, and perhaps we may see something that will please them."

"It cannot be his consort," said Brenda, in a whisper to her sister; "he would have shewn more joy at their appearance."

"It must be the vessel," answered Minna; "I saw his eye glisten at the thought of being again united to the partners of his dangers."

"Perhaps it glistened," said her sister, still apart, "at the thought of leaving Zetland; it is difficult to guess the thought of the heart from the glance of the eye."

"Judge not at least unkindly of a friend's thought," said Minna; "and then, Brenda, if you are mistaken, the fault rests not with you."

During this dialogue Bryce Snaelsfoot was busied in uncoiling the carefully arranged cordage of his pack, which amounted to six good yards of dressed seal-skin, curiously complicated and secured by all manner of knots and buckles. He was considerably interrupted in the task by the

Udaller and others, who pressed him with questions respecting the stranger vessel.

"Were the officers often ashore? and how were they received by the people of Kirkwall?" said Magnus Troil.

"Excellently well," answered Bryce Snaelsfoot; "and the Captain and one or two of his men had been at some of the vanities and dances which went forward in the town; but there had been some word about customs, or king's duties, or the like, and some of the higher folks, that took upon them as magistrates, or the like, had had words with the captain, and he refused to satisfy them; and then it was like he was more coldly looked on, and he spoke of carrying the ship round to Stromness, or the Langhope, for she lay under the guns of the battery at Kirkwall. But he (Bryce) thought she wad bide at Kirkwall till the summer-fair was over, for all that."

"The Orkney gentry," said Magnus Troil, "are always in a hurry to draw the Scotch collar tighter round their own necks. Is it not enough that we must pay *scat* and *wattle*, which were all the public dues under our old Norse

government; but must they come over us with king's dues and customs besides? It is the part of an honest man to resist these things. I have done so all my life, and will do so to the end of it."

There was a loud jubilee and shout of applause amongst the guests, who were (some of them at least,) better pleased with Magnus Troil's latitudinarian principles with respect to the public revenue, which were extremely natural to those living in so secluded a situation, and subjected to many additional exactions, than they had been with the rigour of his judgment on the subject of wrecked goods. But Minna's inexperienced feelings carried her farther than her father, while she whispered to Brenda, not unheard by Cleveland, that the tame spirit of the Orcadians had missed every chance which late incidents had given to emancipate these islands from the Scottish yoke.

"Why," she said, "should we not, under so many changes as late times have introduced, have seized the opportunity to shake off an allegiance which is not justly due from us, and to return to the protection of Denmark, our parent country? Why should we yet hesitate to do this, but that

the gentry of Orkney have mixed families and friendship so much with our invaders, that they have become dead to the throb of the heroic Norse blood, which they derived from their ancestors!"

The latter part of this patriotic speech happened to reach the astonished ears of our friend Triptolemus, who, having a sincere devotion for the Protestant succession, and the Revolution established, was surprised into the ejaculation, "As the old cock crows the young cock learns—hen I should say, mistress, and I crave your pardon if I say any thing amiss in either gender. But it is a happy country where the father declares against the king's customs, and the daughter against the king's crown; and, in my judgment, it can end in naething but trees and tows."

"Trees are scarce among us," said Magnus; "and for ropes, we need them for our rigging, and cannot spare them to be shirt collars."

"And whoever," said the Captain, "takes umbrage at what this young lady says, had better keep his ears and tongue for a safer employment than such an adventure."

"Ay, ay," said Triptolemus, "it helps the matter much to speak truths, whilk are as unwelcome to a proud stomach as wet clover to a cow's, in a land where lads are ready to draw the whittle if a lassie but looks awry. But what manners are to be expected in a country where folks call a pleugh-sock a markal?"

"Hark ye, Master Yellowley," said the Captain, smiling, "I hope my manners are not among those abuses which you come hither to reform; any experiment on them may be dangerous."

"As well as difficult," said Triptolemus drily; "but fear nothing, Captain Cleveland, from my remonstrances. My labours regard the men and things of the earth, and not the men and things of the sea,—you are not of my element."

"Let us be friends then, old clod-compeller," said the Captain.

"Clod-compeller!" said the agriculturist, bethinking himself of the lore of his earlier days; "Clod-compeller *pro* cloud-compeller, Νεφεληγερετα Ζευς—*græcum est*,—in which voyage came you by that phrase?"

"I have travelled books as well as seas in my

day," said the Captain; "but my last voyages have been of a sort to make me forget my early cruizes through classic knowledge. But come here, Bryce,—hast cast off the lashing?—Come all hands, and let us see if he has aught in his cargo that is worth looking upon."

With a proud, and, at the same time, a wily smile, did the crafty pedlar display a collection of wares far superior to those which usually filled his packages, and, in particular, some stuffs and embroideries, of such beauty and curiosity, fringed, flowered, and worked, with such art and magnificence, upon foreign and arabesque patterns, that the sight might have dazzled a far more brilliant company than the simple race of Thule. All beheld and admired, while Mistress Baby Yellowley, holding up her hands, protested it was a sin even to look upon such extravagance, and worse than murther so much as to ask the price of them.

Others, however, were more courageous; and the prices demanded by the merchant, if they were not, as he himself declared, something just more than nothing—short only of an absolute free

gift of his wares, were nevertheless so moderate, as to shew that he himself must have made an easy acquisition of the goods, judging by the rate at which he offered to part with them. Accordingly, the cheapness of the articles created a rapid sale; for in Zetland, as well as elsewhere, wise folks buy more from the prudential desire to secure a good bargain, than from any real occasion for the purchase. The Lady Glowrowrum bought seven petticoats and twelve stomachers on this sole principle, and other matrons present rivalled her in this sagacious species of economy. The Udaller was also a considerable purchaser; but the principal customer for whatever could please the eye of beauty, was the gallant Captain Cleveland, who rummaged the jagger's stores in selecting presents for the ladies of the party, in which Minna and Brenda Troil were especially remembered.

"I fear," said Magnus Troil, "that the young women are to consider these pretty presents as keep-sakes, and that all this liberality is only a sure sign we are soon to lose you?"

This question seemed to embarrass him to whom it was put.

"I scarce know," he said, with some hesitation, "whether this vessel is my consort or no—I must take a trip to Kirkwall to make sure of that matter, and then I hope to return to Dunrossness to bid you all farewell."

"In that case," said the Udaller, after a moment's pause, "I think I may carry you thither. I should be at the Kirkwall fair, to settle with the merchants I have consigned my fish to, and I have often promised Minna and Brenda that they should see the fair. Perhaps also your consort, or these strangers, whoever they be, may have some merchandize that will suit me. I love to see my rigging-loft well stocked with goods, almost as much as to see it full of dancers. We will go to Orkney in my own brig, and I can offer you a hammock if you will."

The offer seemed so acceptable to Cleveland, that, after pouring himself forth in thanks, he seemed determined to mark his joy by exhausting Bryce Snaelsfoot's treasures in liberality to the company. The contents of a purse of gold were transferred to the jagger, with a facility and indifference on the part of its former

owner, which argued either the greatest profusion, or consciousness of superior and inexhaustible wealth; so that Baby whispered to her brother, that, "if he could afford to fling away money at this rate, the lad had made a better voyage in a broken ship, than all the skippers of Dundee had made in their hail anes for a twelvemonth past."

But the angry feeling in which she made this remark was much mollified, when Cleveland, whose object it seemed that evening to be to buy golden opinions of all sorts of men, approached her with a garment somewhat resembling in shape the Scottish plaid, but woven of a sort of wool so soft, that it felt to the touch as if it were composed of eider-down. This, he said, was a part of a Spanish lady's dress, called a *mantilla;* as it would exactly fit the size of Mrs Baby Yellowley, and was very well suited for the fogs of the climate of Zetland, he entreated her to wear it for his sake. The lady, with as much condescending sweetness as her countenance was able to express, not only consented to receive this mark of gallantry, but permitted the donor to arrange the mantilla upon her projecting and bo-

ny shoulder-blades, where, said Claud Halcro, "it hung, for all the world, as if it had been stretched betwixt a couple of cloak-pins."

While the Captain was performing this piece of courtesy, much to the entertainment of the company, which, it may be presumed, was his principal object from the beginning, Mordaunt Mertoun made purchase of a small golden chaplet, with the private intention of presenting it to Brenda, when he should find an opportunity. The price was fixed, and the article was laid aside. Claud Halcro also shewed some desire of possessing a silver box of antique shape, for depositing tobacco, which he was in the habit of using in considerable quantity. But the bard seldom had current coin in promptitude, and indeed, in his wandering way of life, had little occasion for any; and Bryce, on the other hand, his having been hitherto a ready-money trade, protested, that his very moderate profits upon such rare and choice articles, would not allow of his affording credit to the purchaser. Mordaunt gathered the import of this conversation from the mode in which they whispered together, while

the bard seemed to advance a wishful finger towards the box in question, and the cautious pedlar detained it with the weight of his whole hand, as if he had been afraid it would literally make itself wings, and fly into Claud Halcro's pocket. Mordaunt Mertoun at this moment, desirous to gratify an old acquaintance, laid the price of the box on the table, and said he would not permit Master Halcro to purchase that box, as he had settled in his own mind to make him a present of it.

"I cannot think upon robbing you, my dear young friend," said the poet; "but the truth is, that that same box does remind me strangely of glorious John's, out of which I had the honour to take a pinch at Will's Coffee-house, for which I think more highly of my right-hand finger and thumb than any other part of my body; only you must allow me to pay you back the price when my Urkaster stock-fish come to market."

"Settle that as you like betwixt you," said the jagger, taking up Mordaunt's money; "the box is bought and sold."

"And how dare you sell over again," said

Captain Cleveland, suddenly interfering, "what you already have sold to me?"

All were surprised at this interjection, which was hastily made, as Cleveland, having turned from Mistress Baby, had become suddenly, and, as it seemed, not without emotion, aware what articles Bryce Snaelsfoot was now disposing of. To this short and fierce question the jagger, afraid to contradict a customer of his description, answered only by stammering, that "the Lord knew he meant nae offence."

"How, sir! no offence!" said the seaman, "and dispose of my property?" extending his hand at the same time to the box and chaplet; "restore the young gentleman's money, and learn to keep your course on the meridian of honesty."

The jagger, confused and reluctant, pulled out his leathern pouch to repay to Mordaunt the money he had just deposited in it; but the youth was not to be so satisfied.

"The articles," he said, "were bought and sold—these were your own words, Bryce Snaelsfoot, in Master Halcro's hearing; and I will suffer neither you nor any other to deprive me of my property."

"Your property, young man?" said Cleveland; "it is mine,—I spoke to Bryce respecting them an instant before I turned from the table."

"I—I—I had not just heard distinctly," said Bryce, evidently unwilling to offend either party.

"Come, come," said the Udaller, "we will have no quarrelling about baubles; we shall be summoned presently to the rigging-loft,"—so he used to call the apartment used as a ball-room; "and we must all go in good humour; the things shall remain with Bryce for to-night, and to-morrow I will myself settle whom they shall belong to."

The laws of the Udaller in his own house were absolute as those of the Medes. The two young men, regarding each other with looks of sullen displeasure, drew off in different directions.

It is seldom that the second day of a prolonged festival equals the first. The spirits, as well as the limbs, are jaded, and unequal to the renewed expenditure of animation and exertion; and the dance at Burgh Westra was sustained with much less mirth than on the preceding evening. It was yet an hour from midnight, when even the re-

luctant Magnus Troil, after regretting the degeneracy of the times, and wishing he could transfuse into the modern Hialtlanders some of the vigour which still animated his own frame, found himself compelled to give the signal for general retreat.

Just as this took place, Halcro, leading Mordaunt Mertoun a little aside, said he had a message to him from Captain Cleveland.

"A message!" said Mordaunt, his heart beating somewhat thick as he spoke—"A challenge, I suppose?"

"A challenge!" repeated Halcro; "who ever heard of a challenge in our quiet islands? do you think that I look like a carrier of challenges, and to you of all men living?—I am none of those fighting fools, as glorious John calls them; and it was not quite a message I had to deliver—only thus far,—this Captain Cleveland, I find, hath set his heart upon having these articles you looked at."

"He shall not have them, I swear to you," replied Mordaunt Mertoun.

"Nay, but hear me," said Halcro; "it seems that, by the marks or arms that are upon them, he knows that they were formerly his property. Now, were you to give me the box, as you promise, I fairly tell you I should give the man back his own."

"And Brenda might do the like," thought Mordaunt to himself, and instantly replied aloud, "I have thought better of it, my friend. Captain Cleveland shall have the toys he sets such store by, but it is on one sole condition."

"Nay, you will spoil all with your conditions," said Halcro; "for, as glorious John says, conditions are but——"

"Hear me, I say, with patience.—My condition is, that he keep the toys in exchange for the rifle-gun I accepted from him, which will leave no obligation between us on either side."

"I see where you would be—this is Sebastian and Dorax all over. Well, you may let the jagger know he is to deliver the things to Cleveland—I think he is mad to have them—and I will let Cleveland know the conditions annexed, otherwise honest Bryce might come by two payments

instead of one; and I believe his conscience would not choke upon it."

With these words, Halcro went to seek out Cleveland, while Mordaunt, observing Snaelsfoot, who, as a sort of privileged person, had thrust himself into the crowd at the bottom of the dancing-room, went up to him, and gave him directions to deliver the disputed articles to Cleveland as soon as he had an opportunity.

"Ye are in the right, Master Mordaunt," said the jagger; "ye are a prudent and a sensible lad—a calm answer turneth away wrath—and mysel, I sall be willing to please you in ony trifling matters in my sma' way; for, between the Udaller of Burgh Westra and Captain Cleveland, a man is, as it were, atween the de'il and the deep sea; and it was like that the Udaller, in the end, would have taken your part in the dispute, for he is a man that loves justice."

"Which apparently you care very little about, Master Snaelsfoot," said Mordaunt, "otherwise there could have been no dispute whatsoever, the right being so clearly on my side, if you had

pleased to bear witness according to the dictates of truth."

"Mr Mordaunt," said the jagger, "I must own there was, as it were, a colouring or shadow of justice on your side; but then, the justice that I meddle with is only justice in the way of trade, to have an ellwand of due length, if it be not something worn out with leaning on it in my lang and painful journies, and to buy and sell by just weight and measure, twenty-four merks to the lispund; but I have nothing to do, to do justice betwixt man and man, like a Fowde or a Law-right-man at a lawting lang syne."

"No one asked you to do so, but only to give evidence according to your conscience," replied Mordaunt, not greatly pleased either with the part the jagger had acted during the dispute, or the construction which he seemed to put on his own motives for yielding up the point.

But Bryce Snaelsfoot wanted not his answer; "My conscience," he said, "Mr Mordaunt, is as tender as onyman's in my degree; but she is something of a timersome nature, cannot abide angry

folks, and can never speak above her breath, when there is aught of a fray going forward. Indeed, she hath at all times a small and low voice."

"Which you are not much in the habit of listening to," said Mordaunt.

"There is that on your ain breast that proves the contrary," said Bryce, resolutely.

"In my breast?" said Mordaunt, somewhat angrily, "what know I of you?"

"I said *on* your breast, Master Mordaunt, and not *in* it. I am sure nae eye that looks on that waistcoat upon your own gallant brisket, but will say, that the merchant who sold such a piece for four dollars had justice and conscience, and a kind heart to a customer to the boot of a' that; sae ye shouldna be sae thrawart wi' me for having spared the breath of my mouth in a fool's quarrel."

"I thrawart!" said Mordaunt; "pooh, you silly man! I have no quarrel with you."

"I am glad of it," said the travelling merchant; "I will quarrel with no man, with my will—least of all with an old customer; and if you will walk by my advice, you will quarrel nane with Captain Cleveland. He is like one of yon cutters and

slashers that have come into Kirkwall, that think as little of slicing a man, as we do of flinching a whale—it's their trade to fight, and they live by it; and they have the advantage of the like of you, that only take it up at your own hand, and in the way of pastime, when you hae nothing better to do."

The company were now almost all dispersed; and Mordaunt, laughing at the jagger's caution, bade him good night, and went to his own place of repose, which had been assigned to him by Eric Scambester, (who acted the part of chamberlain as well as butler,) in a small room, or rather closet, in one of the out-houses, furnished for the occasion with the hammock of a sailor.

CHAPTER VI.

I pass like night from land to land,
  I have strange power of speech;
So soon as e'er his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me,
  To him my tale I teach.
Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner.

The daughters of Magnus Troil shared the same bed, in a chamber which had been that of their parents before the death of their mother. Magnus, who suffered grievously under that dispensation of Providence, had become disgusted with the apartment. The nuptial chamber was abandoned to the pledges of his bereaved affection, of whom the eldest was at that period only four years old, or thereabouts; and, having been theirs in infancy, continued, though now tricked and adorned according to the best fashion of the islands, and the taste of the lovely sisters them-

selves, to be their sleeping-room, or, in the old Norse dialect, their bower.

It had been for many years the scene of the most intimate confidence, if that could be called confidence, where, in truth, there was nothing to be confided; where neither sister had a secret; and where every thought that had birth in the bosom of the one was, without either hesitation or doubt, confided to the other as spontaneously as it had arisen. But, since Cleveland abode in the mansion of Burgh Westra, each of the lovely sisters had entertained thoughts which are not lightly or easily communicated, unless she who listens to them has previously assured herself that the confidence will be kindly received. Minna had noticed what other and less interested observers had been unable to perceive, that Cleveland, namely, held a lower rank in Brenda's opinion than in her own; and Brenda, on her side, thought that Minna had hastily and unjustly joined in the prejudices which had been excited against Mordaunt Mertoun in the mind of their father. Each was sensible that she was no longer the same to her sister; and this conviction was a painful ad-

dition to other painful apprehensions which they supposed they had to struggle with. Their manner towards each other was, in outward appearances, and in all the little cares by which affection can be expressed, even more assiduously kind than before, as if both, conscious that their internal reserve was a breach of their sisterly union, strove to atone for it by double assiduity in those external marks of affection, which, at other times, when there was nothing to hide, might be omitted without inferring any consequences.

On the night referred to in particular, the sisters felt more especially the decay of the confidence which used to exist betwixt them. The proposed voyage to Kirkwall, and that at the time of the fair, when persons of every degree in these islands repair there, either for business or amusement, was like to be an important incident in lives usually so simple and uniform as theirs; and a few months ago Minna and Brenda would have been awake half the night, anticipating, in their talk with each other, all that was likely to happen on so momentous an occasion. But now the subject was just mentioned, and suffered to drop, as if

the topic was likely to produce difference betwixt them, or to call forth a more open display of their several opinions than either was willing to make to the other.

Yet such was their natural openness and gentleness of disposition, that each sister imputed to herself the fault that there was aught like estrangement existing between them, and when, having finished their devotions, and betaken themselves to their common couch, they folded each other in their arms, and exchanged a sisterly kiss, and a sisterly good night, they seemed mutually to ask pardon, and to exchange forgiveness, although neither said a word of offence, either offered or received; and both were soon plunged in that light and yet profound repose, which is only enjoyed when sleep sinks down on the eyes of youth and innocence.

On the night to which the story relates, both sisters were visited by dreams, which, though varied by the moods and habits of the sleepers, bore yet a strange general resemblance to each other.

Minna dreamed that she was in one of the

most lonely recesses of the beach, called Swartaster, where the incessant operation of the waves, indenting a calcareous rock, has formed a deep *halier*, which, in the language of the island, meant a subterranean cavern, into which the tide ebbs and flows. Many of these run to an extraordinary and unascertained depth underground, and are the safe retreat of cormorants and seals, whom it is neither easy nor safe to pursue to their extreme recesses. Amongst these, this halier of Swartaster was accounted peculiarly inaccessible, and shunned both by fowlers and by seamen, on account of sharp angles and turnings in the cave itself, as well as the sunken rocks which rendered it very dangerous for skiffs or boats to advance far into it, especially if there was the usual swell of an island tide. From the dark-browed mouth of this cavern, it seemed to Minna, in her dream, that she beheld a mermaid issue, not in the classical dress of a Nereid, as in Claud Halcro's mask of the preceding evening, but with comb and glass in hand according, and lashing the waves with that long scaly train, which, in the traditions of the country, forms so frightful a con-

trast with the fair face, long tresses, and displayed bosom of a human and earthly female of surpassing beauty. She seemed to beckon to Minna, while her wild notes rang sadly in her ear, and denounced, in prophetic sounds, calamity and woe.

The vision of Brenda was of a different description, yet equally melancholy. She sat, as she thought, in her favourite bower, surrounded by her father and a party of his most beloved friends, amongst whom Mordaunt Mertoun was not forgotten. She was required to sing; and she strove to entertain them with a lively song, in which she was accounted eminently successful, and which she sung with such simple, yet natural humour, as seldom failed to produce shouts of laughter and applause, while all who could, or who could not sing, were irresistibly compelled to lend their voices to the chorus. But, on this occasion, it seemed as if her own voice refused all its usual duty, and as if, while she felt herself unable to express the words of the well-known air, it assumed, in her own despite, the deep tones and wild and melancholy notes of Nor-

na of Fitful-head, for the purpose of chaunting some wild Runic rhyme, resembling those sung by the heathen priests of old, when the victim (too often human) was bound to the fatal altar of Odin or of Thor.

At length the two sisters at once started from sleep, and, uttering a low scream of fear, clasped themselves in each others arms. For their fancy had not altogether played them false; the sounds which had suggested their dreams were real, and sung within their apartment. They knew the voice well, indeed, and yet, knowing to whom it belonged, their surprise and fear was scarce the less, when they saw the well-known Norna of Fitful-head, seated by the chimney of the apartment, which, during the summer season, contained an iron lamp well trimmed, and, in winter, a fire of wood or of turf.

She was wrapped in her long and ample garment of *wadmaal*, and moved her body slowly to and fro over the pale flame of the lamp, as she sung lines to the following purpose, in a slow, sad, and almost an unearthly accent:

"For leagues along the watery way,
Through gulph and stream my course has been;
The billows know my Runic lay,
And smooth'd their crests to silent green.

"The billows know my Runic lay,—
The gulph grows smooth, the stream is still;
But human hearts, more wild than they,
Know but the rule of wayward will.

"One hour is mine, in all the year,
To tell my woes,—and one alone;
When gleams this magic lamp, 'tis here,—
When dies the mystic light, 'tis gone.

"Daughters of northern Magnus, hail!
The lamp is lit, the flame is clear,—
To you I come to tell my tale,
Awake, arise, my tale to hear!"—

Norna was well known to the daughters of Troil, but it was not without emotion, although varied by their respective dispositions, that they beheld her so unexpectedly, and at such an hour. Their opinions with respect to the supernatural

attributes to which she pretended, were extremely different.

Minna, with an unusual intensity of imagination, although superior in talent to her sister, was more apt to listen to and delight in every tale of wonder, and was at all times more willing to admit impressions which gave her fancy scope and exercise, without minutely examining their reality. Brenda, on the other hand, had, in her gaiety, a slight propensity to satire, and was often tempted to laugh at the very circumstances upon which Minna founded her imaginative dreams; and, like all who love the ludicrous, she did not readily suffer herself to be imposed upon, or overawed, by pompous pretensions of any kind whatever. But as her nerves were weaker and more irritable than those of her sister, she often paid involuntary homage, by her fears, to ideas which her reason disowned; and hence, Claud Halcro used to say, in reference to many of the traditionary superstitions around Burgh Westra, that Minna believed them without trembling, and that Brenda trembled without believing them. In our own more enlightened days, there are few whose un-

doubting mind and native courage have not felt Minna's high-wrought tone of enthusiasm; and perhaps still fewer, who have not, at one time or other, felt, like Brenda, their nerves confess the influence of terrors which their reason disowned and despised.

Under the influence of such different feelings, Minna, when the first moment of surprise was over, prepared to spring from her bed, and go to greet Norna, who, she doubted not, had come on some errand fraught with fate; while Brenda, who only beheld in her a woman partially deranged in her understanding, and who yet, from the extravagance of her claims, regarded her as an undefined object of awe, or rather terror, detained her sister by an eager and terrified grasp, while she whispered in her ear an eager entreaty that she would call for assistance. But the soul of Minna was too highly wrought up by the crisis at which her fate seemed to have arrived, to permit her to follow the dictates of her sister's fears; and, extricating herself from Brenda's hold, she hastily threw on a loose night-gown, and stepping boldly across the apartment, while her heart

throbbed rather with high excitement than with fear, she thus addressed her singular visitor:

"Norna, if your mission regards us, as your words seem to express, there is one of us, at least, who will receive its import with reverence, but without fear."

"Norna, dear Norna," said the tremulous voice of Brenda,—who, feeling no safety in the bed after Minna had quitted it, had followed her, as fugitives crowd into the rear of an advancing army, because they dare not remain behind, and who now stood half concealed by her sister, and holding fast by the skirts of her gown,—"Norna, dear Norna," she said, "whatever you are to say, let it be to-morrow. I will call Euphane Fea the housekeeper, and she will find you a bed for the night."

"No bed for me," said their nocturnal visitor; "no closing of the eyes for me; they have watched as shelf and stack appeared and disappeared betwixt Burgh-Westra and Orkney—they have seen the Man of Hoy sink into the sea, and the Peak of Hengcliff arise from it, and yet they have not tasted of slumber; nor must they slumber now till my task is ended. Sit down, then, Min-

na, and thou, silly trembler, sit down, while I trim my lamp—Don your clothes, for the tale is long, and ere 'tis done, ye will shiver with worse than cold."

"For Heaven's sake, then, put it off till day-light, dear Norna," said Brenda; "the dawn cannot be far distant; and if you are to tell us of any thing frightful, let it be by day-light, and not by the dim glimmer of that blue lamp."

"Patience, fool!" said their nocturnal visitor. "Not by day-light should Norna tell a tale that might blot the sun out of heaven, and blight the hopes of the hundred boats that will leave this shore ere noon, to commence their deep-sea fishing,—ay, and of the hundred families that will await their return. The demon, whom the sounds will not fail to awaken, must shake his dark wings over a shipless and a boatless sea, as he rushes from his mountain to drink the accents of horror he loves so well to listen to."

"Have pity on Brenda's fears, good Norna," said the elder sister, "and at least postpone this frightful communication to another place and hour."

"Maiden, no!" replied Norna, sternly; "it

must be told while that lamp yet burns. Mine is no day-light tale—by that lamp it must be told, which is framed out of the gibbet-irons of the cruel Lord of Wodensvoe, who murdered his brother; and has for its nourishment—enough that it never came either from the fish or from the fruit!—See, it waxes dim and dimmer, nor must my tale last longer than its flame endureth. Sit ye down there while I sit here opposite to you, and place the lamp betwixt us; for within the sphere of its light the demon dares not venture."

The sisters obeyed, Minna casting a slow, awestruck, yet determined look all around, as if to see the being who, according to the doubtful words of Norna, hovered in their neighbourhood; while Brenda's fears were mingled with some share both of anger and of impatience. Norna paid no attention to either, but began her story in the following words:

"Ye know, my daughters, that your blood is allied to mine, but in what degree ye know not; for there was early hostility betwixt your grandsire and him who had the misfortune to call me daughter.—Let me term him by his Christian name of Erlend, for that which marks our rela-

tion I dare not bestow. Your grandsire Olave was the brother of Erlend. But when the wide Udal possessions of their father Rolfe Troil, the most rich and well estated of any who descended from the old Norse stock, were divided betwixt the brothers, the Fowde gave to Erlend his father's lands in Orkney, and reserved for Olave those of Hialtland. Discord arose between the brethren; for Erlend held that he was wronged; and when the Lawting* with the Raddmen and Law-right-men confirmed the division, he went in wrath to Orkney, cursing Hialtland and its inhabitants—cursing his brother and his blood.

"But the love of the rock and of the mountain still wrought on Erlend's mind, and he fixed his dwelling not on the soft hills of Orphir, or the green plains of Gramesey, but in the wild and mountainous Isle of Hoy, whose summit rises to the sky like the cliffs of Foulah and of Feroe.†

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* The Lawting was the Comitia, or Supreme Court of the country, being retained both in Orkney and Zetland, and presenting, in their constitution, the rude origin of a parliament.

† And from which hill of Hoy, at midsummer, the sun may be seen, it is said, at midnight. So says the geographer Bleau, although, according to Dr Wallace, it cannot be the

He knew, that unhappy Erlend, whatever of legendary lore Scald and Bard had left behind them; and to teach me that knowledge, which was to cost us both so dear, was the chief occupation of his old age. I learned to visit each lonely barrow—each lofty cairn—to tell its appropriate tale, and to sooth with rhimes in his praise the spirit of the stern warrior who dwelt within. I knew, where the sacrifices were made of yore to Thor and to Odin, on what stones the blood of the victims flowed—where stood the dark-browed priest—where the crested chiefs, who consulted the will of the idol—where the more distant crowd of inferior worshippers, who looked on in awe or terror. The places most shunned by the timid peasants, had no terrors for me: I dared walk in the fairy circle, and sleep by the magic spring.

"But for my misfortune, I was chiefly fond to linger about the Dwarfie Stone, as it is called, a relique of antiquity, which strangers look on with curiosity, and the natives with awe. It is a huge fragment of a rock, which lies in a broken and

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true body of the sun which is visible, but only its image refracted through some watery cloud upon the horizon.

rude valley, full of stones and precipices, in the recesses of the Ward-hill of Hoy. The inside of the stone has two couches, hewn by no earthly hand, and having a small passage between them. The door-way is now open to the weather; but beside it lies the huge stone, which, adapted to grooves, still visible in the entrance, once had served to open and to close this extraordinary dwelling, which Trolld, a dwarf famous in the northern Sagas, is said to have framed for his own favourite residence. The lonely shepherd avoids the place, for at sun-rise, high noon, or sun-set, the mis-shapen form of the necromantic owner may sometimes still be seen sitting by the Dwarfie Stone.* I feared not the apparition,

* Dr Wallace gives the following account of this curiosity: "There is in Hoy, lying betwixt two hills, a stone called the Dwarfie Stone, which is one entire rock, thirty-six feet long, eighteen feet broad, nine feet thick, hollowed within by the hands of some mason, (for the prints of the irons are to be seen on it to this day) with a square hole of about two feet high for the entry, and a stone proportionable standing before it for a door. Within, at one end, is a bed, excellently cut out of the stone, wherein two men may lie together, at their full length; at the other end is a couch, and in the middle, a hearth for a fire, with a hole cut above for the chimney. It stands in

for, Minna, my heart was as bold, and my hand was as innocent, as yours. In my childish courage, I was even but too presumptuous, and the thirst after things unattainable led me, like our primitive mother, to desire increase of knowledge, even by prohibited means. I longed to possess the power of the Voluspæ and divining women of our ancient race; to wield, like them, command over the elements; and to summon the ghosts of deceased heroes from their caverns, that they might recite their daring deeds, and impart to me their hidden treasures. Often when watching by the Dwarfie Stone, with mine eyes fixed on the Ward-hill, which rises above that gloomy valley, I have distinguished, among the dark rocks, that wonderful carbuncle, which gleams ruddy as a furnace to them who view it from beneath, but has ever become invisible to him whose daring foot has scaled the precipices

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a desolate melancholy place, more than a mile from any inhabited house, and all the ground about is nothing but high heath and heather. It is thought to have been the residence of some melancholy hermit."—*Description of the Islands of Orkney,* 12mo. 1700. p. 51.

from which it darts its splendour.* My vain and youthful bosom burned to investigate these and an hundred other mysteries, which the Sagas that I perused, or learned from Erlend, rather indicated than explained; and in my daring mood, I called on the Lord of the Dwarfie Stone to aid me in attaining knowledge inaccessible to mere mortals."

"And the evil spirit heard your summons," said Minna, her blood curdling as she listened.

"Hush," said Norna, lowering her voice, "vex him not with reproach—he is with us—he hears us even now."

Brenda started from her seat,—"I will to

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* "At the west end of this stone, (*i. e.* the Dwarfie Stone,) stands an exceeding high mountain of a steep ascent, called the Wart-Hill of Hoy, near the top of which, in the months of May, June, and July, about midnight, is seen something that shines and sparkles admirably, and which is often seen a great way off. It hath shined more brightly before than it does now; and though many have climbed up the hill, and attempted to search for it, yet they could find nothing. The vulgar talk of it as some enchanted carbuncle, but I take it rather to be some water sliding down the face of a smooth rock, which, when the sun, at such a time, shines upon, the reflection causeth that admirable splendour."—*Description of Orkney*, p. 52.

Euphane Fea's chamber," she said, " and leave you, Minna and Norna, to finish your stories of hobgoblins and of dwarfs at your own leisure; I care not for them at any time, but I will not endure them at midnight, and by this pale lamp-light."

She was accordingly in the act of leaving the room, when her sister detained her.

" Is this the courage," she said, " of her that disbelieves whatever the history of our fathers tells us of supernatural prodigy? What Norna has to tell concerns the fate, perhaps, of our father and his house;—if I can listen to it, trusting that God and my innocence will protect me from all that is of malign influence, you, Brenda, who believe not in such influence, have surely no cause to tremble. Credit me, that for the guiltless there is no fear."

" There may be no danger," said Brenda, unable to suppress her natural turn for humour, " but, as the old jest book says, there is much fear. However, Minna, I will stay with you, the rather," she added, in a whisper, " that I am loth to leave you alone with this frightful woman, and that I have a dark staircase and long passage be-

twixt and Euphane Fea, else I would have her here ere I were five minutes older."

"Call no one hither, maiden, upon peril of thy life," said Norna; "and interrupt not my tale again, for it cannot and must not be told after that charmed light has ceased to burn."

"And I thank Heaven," said Brenda to herself, "that the oil burns low in the cruize; I am sorely tempted to lend it a puff, but then Norna would be alone with us in the dark, and that would be worse."

So saying, she submitted to her fate, and sat down, determined to listen with all the equanimity which she could command to the remaining part of Norna's tale, which went on as follows:—

"It happened on a hot summer day, and just about the hour of noon," continued Norna, "as I sat by theDwarfie Stone, with my eyes fixed on the Ward-Hill, whence the mysterious and ever-burning carbuncle shed its rays more brightly than usual, and repined in my heart at the restricted bounds of human knowledge, that at length I could not help exclaiming, in the words of an ancient Saga,

"Dwellers of the mountain, rise,
Trolld the powerful, Haims the wise!
Ye who taught weak woman's tongue
Words that sway the wise and strong,—
Ye who taught weak woman's hand
How to wield the magic wand,
And wake the gales on Foulah's steep,
Or lull wild Sumburgh's waves to sleep!—
Still are ye yet?—Not yours the power
You knew in Odin's mightier hour.
What are ye now but empty names,
Powerful Trolld, sagacious Haims,
That, lightly spoken, lightly heard,
Float on the air like thistle's beard?"

"I had scarce uttered these words," continued Norna, "ere the sky, which had been till then unusually clear, grew so suddenly dark around me, that it seemed more like midnight than noon. A single flash of lightning shewed me at once the desolate landscape of heath, morass, mountain, and precipice which lay around; a single clap of thunder wakened all the echoes of the Ward-hill, which continued so long to repeat the sound, that it seemed some rock, rent by the thunderbolt from the summit, was rolling over cliff and precipice into the valley. Immediately after, fell a burst of

rain so precipitous, that I was fain to shun its pelting, by creeping into the interior of the mysterious stone.

"I seated myself on the larger stone couch, which is cut at the farther end of the cavity, and, with my eyes fixed on the smaller bed, wearied myself with conjectures respecting the origin and purpose of my singular place of refuge. Had it been really the work of that powerful Trolld, to whom the poetry of the Scalds referred it? Or was it the tomb of some Scandinavian chief, interred with his arms and his wealth, perhaps also with his immolated wife, that what he loved best in life might not in death be divided from him? Or was it the abode of penance, chosen by some devoted anchorite of later days? Or the idle work of some wandering mechanic, whom chance, and whim, and leisure, had thrust upon such an undertaking? I tell you the thoughts that then floated through my brain, that ye may know that what ensued was not the vision of a prejudiced or prepossessed imagination, but an apparition, as certain as it was awful.

"Sleep had gradually crept on me, amidst my lucubrations, when I was startled from my slumbers

by a second clap of thunder; and, when I awoke, I saw, through the dim light which the upper aperture admitted, the unshapely and indistinct form of Trolld the dwarf, seated opposite to me on the lesser couch, which his square and misshapen bulk seemed absolutely to fill up. I was startled, but not affrighted; for the blood of the ancient race of Lochlin was warm in my veins. He spoke, and his words were of Norse, so old, that few, save my father, or I myself, could have comprehended their import,—such language as was spoken in these islands ere Olave planted the cross on the ruins of heathenism. His meaning was dark also and obscure, like that which the Pagan priests were wont to deliver, in the name of their idols, to the tribes that assembled at the *Helgafels*.* This was the import,—

"A thousand winters dark have flown,
Since o'er the threshold of my stone
A votaress pass'd, my power to own.

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* Or consecrated mountain, used by the Scandinavian priests, for the purposes of their idol-worship.

Visitor bold
Of the mansion of Trolld,
Maiden haughty of heart,
Who hast hither presumed,—
Ungifted, undoom'd,
Thou shalt not depart;
The power thou dost covet
O'er tempest and wave,
Shall be thine, thou proud maiden,
By beach and by cave,—
By stack [1] and by skerry, [2] by noup, [3] and by voe, [4]
By air [5] and by wick, [6] and by helyer [7] and gio, [8]
And by every wild shore which the northern winds know,
And the northern tides lave.
But though this shall be given thee, thou desperately brave,
I doom thee that never the gift thou shalt have,

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[1] *Stack.* A precipitous rock, rising out of the sea.

[2] *Skerry.* A flat insulated rock, not subject to the overflowing of the sea.

[3] *Noup.* A round-headed eminence.

[4] *Voe.* A creek, or inlet of the sea.

[5] *Air.* An open sea-beach.

[6] *Wick.* An open bay.

[7] *Helyer.* A cavern into which the tide flows.

[8] *Gio.* A deep ravine which admits the sea.

Till thou reave thy life's giver
Of the gift which he gave."

"I answered him in nearly the same strain; for the spirit of the ancient Scalds of our race was upon me, and far from fearing the phantom, with whom I sat cooped within so narrow a space, I felt the impulse of that high courage which thrust the ancient Champions and Druidesses upon contests with the invisible world, when they thought that the earth no longer contained enemies worthy to be subdued by them. Therefore did I answer him thus:

"Dark are thy words, and severe,
Thou dweller in the stone;
But trembling and fear
To her are unknown,
Who hath sought thee here,
In thy dwelling lone.
Come what comes soever,
The worst I can endure;
Life is but a short fever,
And Death is the cure."

"The demon scowled at me, as if at once incensed and overawed; and then, coiling himself

up in a thick and sulphurous vapour, he disappeared from his place. I did not, till that moment, feel the influence of fright, but then it seized me. I rushed into the open air, where the tempest had passed away, and all was pure and serene. After a moment's breathless pause, I hasted home, musing by the way on the words of the phantom, which I could not, as often happens, recall so distinctly to memory at the time as I have been since able to do.

"It may seem strange that such an apparition should, in time, have glided from my mind, like a vision of the night—but so it was. I brought myself to believe it the work of fancy—I thought I had lived too much in solitude, and had given way too much to the feelings inspired by my favourite studies. I abandoned them for a time, and I mixed with the youth of my age. I was upon a visit at Kirkwall when I learned to know your father, whom business had brought thither. He easily found access to the relation with whom I lived, who was anxious to compose, if possible, the feud which divided our families. Your father, maidens, has been rather hardened than

changed by years—he had the same manly form, the same old Norse frankness of manner and of heart, the same upright courage and honesty of disposition, with more of the gentle ingenuousness of youth, an eager desire to please, a willingness to be pleased, and a vivacity of spirits which survives not our early years. But though he was thus worthy of love, and though Erlend wrote to me, authorizing his attachment, there was another—a stranger, Minna, a fatal stranger—full of arts unknown to us, and graces which to the plain manners of your father were unknown. Yes, he walked, indeed, amongst us like a being of another and of a superior race.—Ye look on me as if it were strange that I should have attractions for such a lover; but I present nothing that can remind you that Norna of the Fitfulhead was once admired and loved as Ulla Troil—the change betwixt the animated body and the corpse, after decease, is scarce more awful and absolute than I have sustained, while I yet linger on earth. Look on me, maidens—look on me by this glimmering light—Can ye believe that

these hagard and weather-wasted features—these eyes, which have been almost converted to stone, by looking upon sights of terror—these locks, that, mingled with gray, now stream out, the shattered pennons of a sinking vessel—that these, and she to whom they belong, could once be the objects of fond affection? But the waning lamp sinks fast, and let it sink while I tell my infamy. We loved in secret—we met in secret, till I gave the last proof of fatal and of guilty passion!—And now beam out, thou magic glimmer—shine out a little space, thou flame so powerful even in thy feebleness—bid him who hovers near us, keep his dark pinions aloof from the circle thou dost illuminate—live but a little till the worst be told, and then sink when thou wilt into darkness, as black as my guilt and sorrow."

While she spoke this, she drew together the remaining nutriment of the lamp, and trimmed its decaying flame; then again, with a hollow voice, and in broken sentences, pursued her narrative.

"I must waste little time in words. My love was discovered, but not my guilt. Erlend came to Pomona in anger, and transported me to our

solitary dwelling in Hoy. He commanded me to see my lover no more, and to receive Magnus, in whom he was willing to forgive the offences of his father, as my future husband. Alas, I no longer deserved his attachment—my only wish was to escape from my father's dwelling, to conceal my shame in my lover's arms. Let me do him justice—he was faithful—too, too faithful—his perfidy would have bereft me of my senses; but the fatal consequences of his fidelity have done me a tenfold injury."

She paused, and then resumed with the wild tone of insanity, "It has made me the powerful and the despairing Sovereign of the Seas and Winds."

She paused a second time after this wild exclamation, and resumed her narrative in a more composed manner.

"My lover came in secret to Hoy, to concert measures for my flight, and I agreed to meet him, that we might fix the time when his vessel should come into the Sound. I left the house at midnight."

Here she appeared to gasp with agony, and went on with her tale by broken and interrupted sentences. "I left the house at midnight—I had to pass my father's door, and I perceived it was open—I thought he watched us, and that the sound of my steps might not break his slumbers, I closed the fatal door—a light and trivial action—but, God in Heaven! what were the consequences!—At morn, the room was full of suffocating vapour—my father was dead—dead through my act—dead through my disobedience—dead through my infamy! All that follows is mist and darkness—a choking, suffocating, stifling mist envelopes all that I said and did, all that was said and done, until I became assured that my doom was accomplished, and walked forth the calm and terrible being you now behold me—the Queen of the Elements—the sharer in the power of those beings to whom man and his passions give such sport as the tortures of the dog-fish afford the fisherman, when he pierces his eyes with thorns, and turns him once more into his native element, to traverse the

waves in blindness and agony. No, maidens, she whom you see before you is impassive to the follies of which your minds are the sport. I am she that have made the offering—I am she that bereaved the giver of the gift of life which he gave me—the dark saying has been interpreted by my deed, and I am taken from humanity, to be something pre-eminently powerful, pre-eminently wretched." As she spoke thus, the light, which had been long quivering, leaped high for an instant, and seemed about to expire, when Norna interrupting herself, said hastily, "No more now—he comes—he comes—Enough that ye know me, and the right I have to advise and command you.—Approach now, proud Spirit! if thou wilt."

So saying, she extinguished the lamp, and passed out of the apartment with her usual loftiness of step, as Minna could observe from its measured cadence.

CHAPTER VII.

Is all the counsel that we two have shared—
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us—O, and is all forgot?

Midsummer Night's Dream.

The attention of Minna was powerfully arrested by this tale of terror, which accorded with and explained many broken hints respecting Norna, which she had heard from her father, and other near relations, and she was for a time so lost in surprise, not unmingled with horror, that she did not even attempt to speak to her sister Brenda. When, at length, she called her by her name, she received no answer, and, on touching her hand, she found it cold as ice. Alarmed to the uttermost, she threw open the lattice and the

window-shutters, and admitted at once the free air and the pale glimmer of the hyperborean summer night. She then became sensible that her sister was in a swoon. All thoughts concerning Norna, her frightful tale, and her mysterious connection with the invisible world, at once vanished from Minna's thoughts, and she hastily ran to the apartment of the old house-keeper, to summon her aid, without reflecting for a moment what sights she might encounter in the long dark passages which she had to traverse.

The old woman hastened to Brenda's assistance, and instantly applied such remedies as her experience suggested; but the poor girl's nervous system had been so much agitated by the horrible tale she had just heard, that, when recovered from her swoon, her utmost endeavours to compose her mind could not prevent her falling into a hysterical fit of some duration. This also was subdued by the experience of old Euphane Fea, who was well versed in all the simple pharmacy used by the natives of Zetland, and who, after administering a composing draught, distilled from simples and wild flowers, at length saw

her patient resigned to sleep. Minna stretched herself beside her sister, kissed her cheek, and courted slumber in her turn; but the more she invoked it, the farther it seemed to fly from her eyelids; and if at times she was disposed to sink into repose, the voice of the involuntary parricide seemed again to sound in her ears, and startled her into consciousness.

The early morning hour at which they were accustomed to arise found the state of the sisters different from what might have been expected. A sound sleep had restored the spirit of Brenda's lightsome eye, and the rose on her laughing cheek; the transient indisposition of the preceding night having left as little trouble on her look, as the fantastic terrors of Norna's tale had been able to impress on her imagination. The looks of Minna, on the contrary, were melancholy, downcast, and apparently exhausted by watching and anxiety. They said at first little to each other, as if afraid of touching a subject so fraught with emotion as the scene of the preceding night. It was not until they had performed together their devotions, as usual, that Brenda, while lacing her sister's bod

dice, for they rendered the services of the toilet to each other reciprocally, became sensible of the paleness of her sister's looks; and having ascertained, by a glance at the mirror, that her own did not wear the same dejection, she kissed Minna's cheek, and said affectionately, "Claud Halcro was right, my dearest sister, when his poetical folly gave us these names of Night and Day."

"And wherefore should you say so now?" said Minna.

"Because we each are bravest in the season that we take our name from: I was frightened well nigh to death, by hearing those things last night, which you endured with courageous firmness; and now, when it is broad light, I can think of them with composure, while you look as pale as a spirit who is surprised by sun-rise."

"You are lucky, Brenda," said her sister, gravely, "who can so soon forget such a tale of wonder and of horror."

"The horror," said Brenda, "is never to be forgotten, unless one could hope that the unfortunate woman's excited imagination, which shews

itself so active in conjuring up apparitions, may have fixed on her an imaginary crime."

"You believe nothing, then," said Minna, "of her interview at the Dwarfie Stone, that wondrous place, of which so many tales are told, and which, for so many centuries, has been reverenced as the work of a dæmon, and as his abode?"

"I believe," said Brenda, "that our unhappy relative is no impostor,—and therefore I believe that she was at the Dwarfie Stone during a thunder-storm, that she sought shelter in it, and that, during a swoon, or during sleep, perhaps, some dream visited her, concerned with the popular traditions with which she was so conversant; but I cannot easily believe more."

"And yet the event," said Minna, "corresponded to the dark intimations of the vision."

"Pardon me," said Brenda, "I rather think the dream would never have been put into shape, or perhaps remembered at all, but for the event. She told us herself she had nearly forgot the vision, till after her father's dreadful death,—and who shall warrant how much of what she then

supposed herself to remember was not the creation of her own fancy, disordered as it naturally was by the horrid accident? Had she really seen and conversed with a necromantic dwarf, she was like to remember the conversation long enough—at least I am sure I should."

"Brenda," replied Minna, "you have heard the good minister of the Cross Kirk say, that human wisdom was worse than folly, when it was applied to mysteries beyond its comprehension; and that if we believed no more than we could understand, we should resist the evidence of our senses, which presented us at every turn circumstances as certain as they were unintelligible."

"You are too learned yourself, sister," answered Brenda, "to need the assistance of the good minister of Cross Kirk; but I think his doctrine only related to the mysteries of our religion, which it is our duty to receive without investigation or doubt—but in things occurring in common life, as God has bestowed reason upon us, we cannot act wrong in employing it. But you, my dear Minna, have a warmer fancy than mine, and are willing to receive all those wonderful

stories for truth, because you love to think of sorcerers, and dwarfs, and water-spirits, and would like much to have a little trow, or fairy, as the Scotch call them, with a green coat, and a pair of wings as brilliant as the hues of the starling's neck, specially to attend on you."

"It would spare you at least the trouble of lacing my boddice," said Minna, "and of lacing it wrong too; for in the heat of your argument you have missed two pye-holes."

"That error shall be presently mended," said Brenda; "and then, as one of our friends might say, I will haul tight and belay—but you draw your breath so deeply, that it will be a difficult matter."

"I only sighed," said Minna, in some confusion, "to think how soon you can trifle with and ridicule the misfortunes of this extraordinary woman."

"I do not ridicule them, God knows," replied Brenda, somewhat angrily; "it is you, Minna, who turn all I say in truth and kindness, to something harsh or wicked. I look on Norna as a woman of very extraordinary abilities, which

are very often reconciled with a strong cast of insanity; and I consider her as better skilled in the signs of the weather than any woman in Zetland. But that she has any power over the elements, I no more believe, than I do in the nursery stories of King Erick, who could make the wind blow from the point he set his cap to."

Minna, somewhat nettled with the obstinate incredulity of her sister, replied sharply, "And yet, Brenda, this woman—half-mad woman, and the veriest impostor, is the person by whom you chuse to be advised in the matter next your own heart at this moment."

"I do not know what you mean," said Brenda, colouring deeply, and shifting to get away from her sister. But as she was now undergoing the ceremony of being laced in her turn, her sister had the means of holding her fast by the silken string with which she was fastening the boddice, and, tapping her on the neck, which expressed, by its sudden writhe, and sudden change to a scarlet hue, as much pettish confusion as she had desired to provoke, she added, more mildly,

"Is it not strange, Brenda, that, used as we have been by the stranger Mordaunt Mertoun, whose assurance has brought him uninvited to a house where his presence is so unacceptable, you should still look or think of him with favour? Surely, that you do so should be a proof to you, that there are such things as spells in the country, and that you yourself labour under them. It is not for nought that Mordaunt wears a chain of elfin gold—look to it, Brenda, and be wise in time."

"I have nothing to do with Mordaunt Mertoun," answered Brenda, hastily, "nor do I know or care what he or any other young man wears about his neck. I could see all the gold chains of all the bailies of Edinburgh, that Lady Glowrowrum speaks so much of, without falling in fancy with one of the wearers." And, having thus complied with the female rule of pleading not guilty in general to such an indictment, she immediately resumed, in a different tone, "But, to say the truth, Minna, I think you, and all of you, have judged far too hastily about this young

friend of our's, who has been so long our most intimate companion. Mind, Mordaunt Mertoun is no more to me than he is to you—yourself best know how little difference he made betwixt us; and that, chain or no chain, he lived with us like a brother with two sisters; and yet you can turn him off at once, because a wandering seaman, of whom we know nothing, and a peddling jagger, whom we well know to be a thief, a cheat, and a liar, speak words and carry tales in his disfavour. I do not believe he ever said he could have his choice of either of us, and only waited to see which was to have Burgh-Westra and Bredness Voe—I do not believe he ever spoke such a word, or harboured such a thought, as that of making a choice between us."

"Perhaps," said Minna, coldly, "you may have had reason to know that his choice was already determined."

"I will not endure this," said Brenda, giving way to her natural vivacity, and springing from between her sister's hands; then turning round and facing her, while her glowing cheek was ri-

valled in the deepness of its crimson, by as much of her neck and bosom as the upper part of the half-laced boddice permitted to be visible,—"Even from you, Minna," she said, "I will not endure this! You know that all my life I have spoken the truth, and that I love the truth; and I tell you, that Mordaunt Mertoun never in his life made distinction betwixt you and me, until——"

Here some feeling of consciousness stopped her short, and her sister replied, with a smile, "Until *when*, Brenda? Methinks, your love of truth seems choked with the sentence you were bringing out."

"Until you ceased to do him the justice he deserves," said Brenda, firmly, "since I must speak out. I have little doubt that he will not long throw away his friendship on you, who hold it so lightly."

"Be it so," said Minna; "you are secure from my rivalry, either in his love or friendship. But bethink you better, Brenda—this is no scandal of Cleveland's—Cleveland is incapable of

slander—no falsehood of Bryce Snaelsfoot—not one of our friends or acquaintance but what says it has been the common talk of the island, that the daughters of Magnus Troil were patiently awaiting the choice of the nameless and birthless stranger, Mordaunt Mertoun.—Is it fitting that this should be said of us, the descendants of a Norwegian Jarl, and the daughters of the first Udaller in Zetland? or, would it be modest or maidenly to submit to it unresented, were we the meanest lasses that ever lifted a milking-pail?"

"The tongues of fools are no reproach," replied Brenda, warmly; "I will never quit my own thoughts of an innocent friend for the gossip of the island, which can put the worst meaning on the most innocent actions."

"Hear but what our friends say," repeated Minna; "hear but the Lady Glowrowrum; hear but Maddie and Clara Groatsettars."

"If I were to hear Lady Glowrowrum," said Brenda, steadily, "I should listen to the worst tongue in Zetland; and as for Maddie and Clara Groatsettars, they were both blithe enough to

get Mordaunt to sit betwixt them at dinner the day before yesterday, as you might have observed yourself, but that your ear was better engaged."

"Your eyes, at least, have been but indifferently engaged, Brenda," retorted the elder sister, "since they were fixed on a young man whom all the world but yourself believes to have talked of us with the most insolent presumption; and even if he be innocently charged, Lady Glowrowrum says it is unmaidenly and bold of you even to look in the direction where he sits, knowing it must confirm such reports."

"I will look which way I please," said Brenda, growing still warmer; "Lady Glowrowrum shall neither rule my thoughts, nor my words, nor my eyes. I hold Mordaunt Mertoun to be innocent,—I will look at him as such,—I will speak of him as such; and if I did not speak to him also, and behave to him as usual, it is in obedience to my father, and not for what Lady Glowrowrum, and all her nieces, had she twenty instead of two, could think, wink, nod, or tattle, about the matter that concerns them not."

"Alas! Brenda," answered Minna, with calmness, "this vivacity is more than is required for the defence of the character of a mere friend!—Beware—He who ruined Norna's peace for ever, was a stranger, admitted to her affections against the will of her family."

"He was a stranger," replied Brenda, with emphasis, "not only in birth, but in manners. She had not been bred up with him from her youth,—she had not known the gentleness, the frankness of his disposition, by an intimacy of many years. He was indeed a stranger, in character, temper, birth, manners, and morals,—some wandering adventurer, perhaps, whom chance or tempest had thrown upon the islands, and who knew how to mask a false heart with a frank brow. My good sister, take home your own warning. There are other strangers at Burgh Westra, besides this poor Mordaunt Mertoun."

Minna seemed for a moment overwhelmed with the rapidity with which her sister retorted her suspicion and her caution. But her natural loftiness of disposition enabled her to reply with assumed composure.

"Were I to treat you, Brenda, with the want of confidence you shew towards me, I might reply that Cleveland is no more to me than Mordaunt was; or than young Swaraster, or Lawrence Ericson, or any other favourite guest of my father's now is. But I scorn to deceive you, or to disguise my thoughts,—I love Clement Cleveland."

"Do not say so, my dearest sister," said Brenda, abandoning at once the air of acrimony with which the conversation had been latterly conducted, and throwing her arms around her sister's neck, with looks, and with a tone, of the most earnest affection,—"do not say so, I implore you! I will renounce Mordaunt Mertoun, —I will swear never to speak to him again; but do not repeat that you love this Cleveland!"

"And why should I not repeat," said Minna, disengaging herself gently from her sister's grasp, "a sentiment in which I glory? The boldness, the strength and energy of his character, to which command is natural, and fear unknown,—these very properties, which alarm you for my happiness, are the qualities which insure it. Remem-

ber, Brenda, that when your foot loved the calm smooth sea-beach of the summer sea, mine ever delighted in the summit of the precipice, when the waves are in fury."

"And it is even that which I dread," said Brenda; "it is even that adventurous disposition which now is urging you to the brink of a precipice more dangerous than ever was washed by a spring-tide. This man,—do not frown, I will say no slander of him;—but is he not, even in your own partial judgment, stern and overbearing? accustomed, as you say, to command; but, for that very reason, commanding where he has no right to do so, and leading whom it would most become him to follow? rushing on danger, rather for its own sake, than for any other object? And can you think of being yoked with a spirit so unsettled and stormy, whose life has hitherto been led in scenes of death and peril, and who, even while sitting by your side, cannot disguise his impatience again to engage in them? A lover, methinks, should love his mistress better than his own life; but yours, my dear Minna, loves

her less than the pleasure of inflicting death on others."

"And it is even for that I love him," said Minna. "I am a daughter of the old dames of Norway, who could send their lovers to battle with a smile, and slay them, with their own hands, if they returned with dishonour. My lover must scorn the mockeries by which our degraded race strive for distinction, or practise them only in sport, and in earnest of nobler dangers. No whale-striking bird-nesting favourite for me; my lover must be a Sea-king, or what else modern times may give that draws near to that lofty character."

"Alas, my sister!" said Brenda, "it is now that I must in earnest begin to believe the force of spells and of charms. You remember the Spanish story which you took from me long since, because I said, in your admiration of the chivalry of the olden times of Scandinavia, you rivalled the extravagance of the hero.—Ah, Minna! your colour shews that your conscience checks you, and reminds you of the book I mean;—is it more

wise, think you, to mistake a wind-mill for a giant, or the commander of a paltry corsair for a Kiempe, or a Vi-king?"

Minna did indeed colour with anger at this insinuation, of which, perhaps, she felt in some degree the truth.

"You have a right," she said, "to insult me, because you are possessed of my secret."

Brenda's soft heart could not resist this charge of unkindness; she adjured her sister to pardon her, and the natural kindness of Minna's heart could not resist her entreaties.

"We are unhappy," she said, as she dried her sister's tears, "that we cannot see with the same eyes—let us not make each other more so by mutual insult and unkindness. You have my secret—it will not, perhaps, long be one, for my father shall have the confidence to which he is entitled, so soon as certain circumstances will permit me to offer it. Meantime, I repeat, you have my secret, and I more than suspect that I have yours in exchange, though you refuse to own it."

"How, Minna!" said Brenda, "would you have me acknowledge for any one such feelings as

you allude to, ere he has said the least word that could justify such a confession?"

"Surely not; but a hidden fire may be distinguished by heat as well as flame."

"You understand these signs, Minna," said Brenda, hanging down her head, and in vain endeavouring to suppress the temptation to repartee which her sister's remark offered; "but I can only say, that, if ever I love at all, it shall not be until I have been asked to do so once or twice at least, which has not yet chanced to me. But do not let us renew our quarrel, and rather let us think why Norna should have told us that horrible tale, and to what she expects it should lead."

"It must have been as a caution," replied Minna—"a caution which our situation, and, I will not deny it, which mine in particular might seem to her to call for;—but I am alike strong in my own innocence, and in the honour of Cleveland."

Brenda would fain have replied, that she did not confide so absolutely in the latter security as in the first; but she was prudent, and, forbearing to awaken the former painful discussion, only re-

plied, " It is strange that Norna should have said nothing more of her lover. Surely he could not desert her in the extremity of misery to which he had reduced her?"

" There may be agonies of distress," said Minna, after a pause, " in which the mind is so much jarred, that it ceases to be responsive even to the feelings which have most engrossed it;—her sorrow for her lover may have been swallowed up in horror and despair."

" Or he may have fled from the islands, in fear of our father's vengeance," said Brenda.

" If for fear, or faintness of heart," said Minna, looking upwards, " he was capable of flying from the ruin which he had occasioned, I trust he has long ere this sustained the punishment which Heaven reserves for the most base and dastardly of traitors and of cowards.—Come, sister, we are ere this expected at the breakfast board."

And they went thither, arm in arm, with much more of confidence than had lately subsisted between them; the little quarrel which had taken place having served the purpose of a *bourasque*, or

sudden squall, which dispels mists and vapours, and leaves fair weather behind it.

On their way to the breakfast apartment, they agreed that it was unnecessary, and might be imprudent, to communicate to their father the circumstance of the nocturnal visit, or to let him observe that they now knew more than formerly of the melancholy history of Norna.

CHAPTER VIII.

> But lost to me, for ever lost those joys,
> Which reason scatters, and which time destroys.
> No more the midnight fairy train I view,
> All in the merry moonlight tippling dew.
> Even the last lingering fiction of the brain,
> The churchyard ghost, is now at rest again.
>
> *The Library.*

THE moral bard, from whom we borrow the motto to this chapter, has touched a theme with which most readers have some feelings that vibrate unconsciously. Superstition, when not arrayed in her full horrors, but laying a gentle hand only on her suppliant's head, had charms which we fail not to regret, even in those stages of society from which her influence is well nigh banished by the light of reason and general education. At least, in more ignorant periods, her system of ideal terrors had something in

them interesting to minds which had few means of excitement. This is more especially true of those lighter modifications of superstitious feelings and practices which mingle in the amusements of the ruder ages, and are, like the auguries of Hallow-e'en in Scotland, considered partly as matter of merriment, partly as sad and prophetic earnest. And, with similar feelings, people even of tolerable education have, in our times, sought the cell of a fortune-teller, upon a frolic, as it is termed, and yet not always in a disposition absolutely sceptical towards the responses they receive.

When the sisters of Burgh Westra arrived in the apartment destined for a breakfast, as ample as that which we have described on the preceding morning, and had undergone a jocular rebuke from the Udaller for their late attendance, they found the company, most of whom had already breakfasted, engaged in an ancient Norwegian custom, of the character which we have just described.

It seems to have been borrowed from those poems of the Scalds, in which champions and he-

roines are so often represented as seeking to know their destiny from some sorceress or prophetess, who, as in the legend called by Gray the Descent of Odin, awakens by the force of Runic rhyme the unwilling revealer of the doom of fate, and compels from her answers, often of dubious import, but which were then believed to express some shadow of the events of futurity.

An old sybil, Euphane Fea, the housekeeper we have already mentioned, was installed in the recess of a large window, studiously darkened by bear-skins and other miscellaneous drapery, so as to give it something the appearance of a Laplander's hut, and accommodated, like a confessional chair, with an aperture, which permitted the person within to hear with ease whatever questions should be put, though not to see the querist. Here seated, the voluspa, or sybil, was to listen to the rhymical inquiries which should be made to her, and to return an extemporaneous answer. The drapery was supposed to prevent her from seeing by what individuals she was consulted, and the intended or accidental reference which the answer given under such cir-

cumstances bore to the situation of the person by whom the question was asked, often furnished food for laughter, and sometimes, as it happened, for more serious reflection. The sybil was usually chosen from her possessing the talent of improvisation in the Norse poetry; no unusual accomplishment, where the minds of many were stored with old verses, and where the rules of metrical composition are uncommonly simple. The questions were also put in verse; but as this power of extemporaneous composition, though common, could not be supposed universal, the medium of an interpreter might be used by any querist, which interpreter, holding the consulter of the oracle by the hand, and standing by the place from which the oracles were issued, had the task of rendering into verse the subject of inquiry.

On the present occasion, Claud Halcro was summoned, by the universal voice, to perform the part of interpreter; and, after shaking his head, and muttering some apology for decay of memory and poetical powers, contradicted at once by his own conscious smile of confidence and by the general shout of the company, the light-hearted

old man came forward to play his part in the proposed entertainment.

But just as it was about to commence, the arrangement of parts was singularly altered. Norna of the Fitful-head, whom every one excepting the two sisters believed to be at the distance of many miles, suddenly, and without greeting, entered the apartment, walked majestically up to the bear-skin tabernacle, and signed to the female who was there seated to abdicate her sanctuary. The old woman came forth, shaking her head, and looking like one overwhelmed with fear; nor, indeed, were there many in the company who saw with absolute composure the sudden appearance of a person, so well known and so generally feared as Norna.

She paused a moment at the entrance of the tent; and, as she raised the skin which formed the entrance, she looked up to the north, as if imploring from that quarter a strain of inspiration; then signing to the surprised guests that they might approach in succession the shrine in which she was about to install herself, she entered the tent, and was shrouded from their sight.

But this was a different sport from what the company had meditated, and to most of them seemed to present so much more of earnest than of game, that there was no alacrity shewn to consult the oracle. The character and pretensions of Norna seemed to almost all present too serious for the part which she had assumed; the men whispered to each other, and the women, according to Claud Halcro, realized the description of glorious John Dryden,—

"With horror shuddering, on a heap they ran."

The pause was interrupted by the loud manly voice of the Udaller. "Why does the game stand still, my masters? Are you afraid because my kinswoman is to play our Voluspa? it is kindly done in her, to do for us what none in the isles can do so well; and we will not baulk our sport for it, but rather go on the merrier."

There was still a pause in the company, and Magnus Troil added, "It shall never be said that my kinswoman sat in her bower unhalsed, as if she were some of the old mountain-giantesses, and all from faint heart. I will speak first my-

self; but the rhime comes worse from my tongue than when I was a score of years younger. Claud Halcro, you must stand by me."

Hand in hand they approached the shrine of the supposed sybil, and after a moment's consultation together, Halcro thus expressed the query of his friend and patron. Now, the Udaller, like many persons of consequence in Zetland, who, as Sir Robert Sibbald has testified for them, had begun thus early to apply both to commerce and navigation, was concerned to some extent in the whale-fishery of the season, and the bard had been directed to put into his halting verse an inquiry concerning its success.

CLAUD HALCRO.

"Mother darksome, Mother dread—
Dweller on the Fitfulhead,
Thou canst see what deeds are done
Under the never-setting sun.
Look through sleet, and look through frost,
Look to Greenland's caves and coast,—
By the ice-berg is a sail
Chasing of the swarthy whale;

Mother doubtful, Mother dread,
Tell us, has the good ship sped?"

The jest seemed to turn to earnest, as all, bending their heads around, listened to the voice of Norna, who, without a moment's hesitation, answered from the recesses of the tent in which she was inclosed,

NORNA.

"The thought of the aged is ever on gear,—
On his fishing, his furrow, his flock, and his steer;
But thrive may his fishing, flock, furrow, and herd,
While the aged for anguish shall tear his grey beard."

There was a momentary pause, during which Triptolemus had time to whisper, "If ten witches and as many warlocks were to swear it, I will never believe that a decent man will either fash his beard or himself about any thing, so long as stock and crop goes as it should do."

But the voice from within the tent resumed its low monotonous tone of recitation, and, interrupting farther commentary, proceeded as follows:—

NORNA.

"The ship, well-laden as bark need be,
Lies deep in the furrow of the Iceland sea;—
The breeze for Zetland blows fair and soft,
And gaily the garland* is fluttering aloft:
Seven good fishes have spouted their last,
And their jaw-bones are hanging to yard and mast;†
Two are for Lerwick, and two for Kirkwall,—
Three for Burgh Westra, the choicest of all."

"Now the powers above look down and protect us!" said Bryce Snaelsfoot; "for it is mair than woman's wit that has spaed out that ferly. I saw them at North Ronaldsha, that had seen the good bark, the Olave of Lerwick, that our worthy patron has such a great share in that she may be called his own in a manner, and they

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* The garland is an artificial coronet, composed of ribbands by those young women who take an interest in a whaling vessel or her crew: it is always displayed from the rigging, and preserved with great care during the voyage.

† The best oil exudes from the jaw-bones of the whale, which, for the purpose of collecting it, are suspended to the masts of the vessel.

had broomed* the bark, and, as sure as there are stars in heaven, she answered them for seven fish, exact as Norna has tell'd us in her rhime."

"Umph—seven fish exactly? and you heard it at North Ronaldsha?" said Captain Cleveland, "and I suppose told it as a good piece of news when you came hither?"

"It never crossed my tongue, Captain," answered the pedlar; "I have kend mony chapmen, travelling merchants, and such like, neglect their goods to carry clashes and clavers up and down, from one country-side to another; but that is no traffic of mine. I dinna believe I have mentioned the Olave's having made up her cargo to three folks since I crossed to Dunrossness."

"But if one of those three had spoke the news over again, and it is two to one that such a thing happened, the old lady prophecies upon velvet."

Such was the speech of Cleveland, addressed

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* There is established among whalers a sort of telegraphic signal, in which a certain number of motions, made with a broom, express to any other vessel the number of fish which they have caught.

to Magnus Troil, and heard without any applause. The Udaller's respect for his country extended to its superstitions, and so did the interest which he took in his unfortunate kinswoman. If he never rendered a precise assent to her high supernatural pretensions, he was not at least desirous of hearing them disputed by others.

"Norna," he said, "his cousin, (an emphasis on the word,) held no communication with Bryce Snaelsfoot, or his acquaintances. He did not pretend to explain how she came by her information; but he had always remarked that Scotsmen, and indeed strangers in general, when they came to Zetland, were ready to find reasons for things which remained sufficiently obscure to those whose ancestors had dwelt there for ages."

Captain Cleveland took the hint, and bowed, without attempting to defend his own scepticism.

"And now forward, my brave hearts," said the Udaller; "and may all have as good tidings as I have; three whales cannot but yield—let me think how many hogsheads."

There was an obvious reluctance on the part

of the guests to be the next in consulting the oracle of the tent.

"Gude news are welcome to some folks, if they came frae the de'il himsell," said Mistress Baby Yellowley, addressing the Lady Glowrowrum, for a similarity of disposition in some respects had made a sort of intimacy betwixt them; "but I think, my leddy, that this has ower mickle of rank witchcraft in it to have the countenance of douce Christian folks like you and me, my leddy."

"There may be something in what you say, my dame," replied the good Lady Glowrowrum; "but we Hialtlanders are no just like other folks; and this woman, if she be a witch, being the Fowde's friend and near kinswoman, it will be ill ta'en if we haena our fortunes spaed like a' the rest of them; and sae my nieces may e'en step forward in their turn, and nae harm dune. They will hae time to repent, ye ken, in the course of nature, if there be ony thing wrang in it, Mistress Yellowley."

While others remained under similar uncer-

tainty and apprehension, Halcro, who saw by the knitting of the old Udaller's brows, and by a certain impatient shuffle of his right foot, like the motion of a man who with difficulty refrains from stamping, that his patience began to wax rather thin, gallantly declared, that he himself would, in his own person, and not as a procurator for others, put the next query to the Pythoness. He paused a minute—collected his rhimes, and thus addressed her:

CLAUD HALCRO.

"Mother doubtful, Mother dread,
Dweller of the Fitful-head,
Thou hast conn'd full many a rhime,
That lives upon the surge of time:
Tell me, shall my lays be sung,
Like Hacon's of the golden tongue,
Long after Halcro's dead and gone?
Or, shall Hialtland's minstrel own
One note to rival glorious John?"

The voice of the sybil immediately replied, from her sanctuary,

NORNA.

"The infant loves the rattle's noise;
Age, double childhood, hath its toys;
But different far the descant rings,
As strikes a different hand the strings.
The eagle mounts the polar sky—
The Imber-goose, unskill'd to fly,
Must be content to glide along,
Where seal and sea-dog list his song."

Halcro bit his lip, shrugged his shoulders, and then, instantly recovering his good humour, and the ready, though slovenly power of extemporaneous composition, with which long habit had invested him, he gallantly rejoined,

"Be mine the Imber-goose to play,
And haunt lone cave and silent bay;—
The archer's aim so shall I shun—
So shall I 'scape the levell'd gun—
Content my verse's tuneless jingle,
With Thule's sounding tides to mingle,
While, to the ear of wondering wight,
Upon the distant headland's height,
Soften'd by murmur of the sea,
The rude sounds seem like harmony!"

As the little bard stepped back, with an alert gait, and satisfied air, general applause followed the spirited manner in which he had acquiesced in the doom which levelled him with an Imbergoose. But his resigned and courageous submission did not even yet encourage any other person to consult the redoubted Norna.

"The coward fools!" said the Udaller. "Are you too afraid, Captain Cleveland, to speak to an old woman?—Ask her any thing—ask her whether the twelve-gun sloop at Kirkwall be your consort or no."

Cleveland looked at Minna, and, probably conceiving that she watched with anxiety his answer to her father's question, he collected himself, after a moment's hesitation.

"I never was afraid of man or woman.—Master Halcro, you have heard the question which our host desires me to ask—put it in my name, and in your own way—I pretend to as little skill in poetry as I do in witchcraft."

Halcro did not wait to be invited twice, but, grasping Captain Cleveland's hand in his, according to the form which the game prescribed,

he put the query which the Udaller had dictated to the stranger, in the following words:

"Mother doubtful, Mother dread,
Dweller of the Fitful-head,
A gallant bark from far abroad,
Saint Magnus hath her in his road,
With guns and firelocks not a few—
A silken and a scarlet crew,
Deep stored with precious merchandize,
Of gold, and goods of rare device—
What hath this our comrade bold
Of interest in bark, goods, and gold?"

There was a pause of unusual duration ere the oracle would return any answer; and when she replied, it was in a lower, though an equally decided tone, with that which she had hitherto employed.—

NORNA.

"Gold is ruddy, fair, and free,
Blood is crimson, and dark to see;—
I look'd out on Saint Magnus Bay,
And I saw a falcon that hath struck her prey,—
A gobbit of flesh in her beak she bore,
And talons and singles are dripping with gore;

Let he that asks after them look on his hand,
And if there is blood on't, he's one of their band."

Cleveland smiled scornfully, and held out his hand,—"Few men have been on the Spanish Main as often as I have, without having had to do with the *Guarda Costas* once and again; but there never was aught like a stain on my hand that a wet towel would not wipe away."

The Udaller added his voice potential—"There is never peace with Spaniards beyond the Line,—I have heard Captain Tragendeck and honest old Commodore Rummelaer say so an hundred times, and they have both been down in the Bay of Honduras, and all thereabouts.—I hate all Spaniards, since they came here and reft the Fair Isle men of their vivers in 1558. I have heard my grandfather speak of it; and there is an old Dutch history somewhere about the house, that shews what work they made in the Low Countries long since.—There is neither mercy nor faith in them."

"True—true, my old friend," said Cleveland; "they are as jealous of their Indian possessions

as an old man of his young bride; and if they can catch you at disadvantage, the mines for your life is the word,—and so we fight them with our colours nailed to the mast."

"That is the way," shouted the Udaller; "the old British jack should never down. When I think of the wooden walls, I almost think myself an Englishman, only it would be becoming too like my Scots neighbours;—but come, no offence to any here, gentlemen—all are friends, and all are welcome.—Come, Brenda, go on with the play—do you speak next, you have Norse rhimes enough we all know."

"But none that suits the game we play at, father," said Brenda, drawing back.

"Nonsense!" said her father, pushing her onward, while Halcro seized on her reluctant hand; "never let mistimed modesty mar honest mirth—Speak for Brenda, Halcro—it is your trade to interpret maidens' thoughts."

The poet bowed to the beautiful young woman with the devotion of a poet and the gallantry of a traveller, and having, in a whisper, reminded her that she was in no way responsible for the

nonsense he was about to speak, he paused, looked upward, simpered as if he had caught a sudden idea, and at length set off in the following verses:—

CLAUD HALCRO.

"Mother doubtful, Mother dread—
Dweller of the Fitful-head,
Well thou know'st it is thy task
To tell what Beauty will not ask;—
Then steep thy words in wine and milk,
And weave a doom of gold and silk,—
For we would know, shall Brenda prove
In love, and happy in her love?"

The prophetess replied almost immediately from behind her curtain:—

NORNA.

"Untouch'd by love, the maiden's breast
Is like the snow on Rona's crest,
High seated in the middle sky,
In bright and barren purity;
But by the sunbeam gently kiss'd,
Scarce by the gazing eye 'tis miss'd,
Ere down the lonely valley stealing,
Fresh grass and growth its course revealing,

It cheers the flock, revives the flower,
And decks some happy shepherd's bower."

"A comfortable doctrine, and most justly spoken," said the Udaller, seizing the blushing Brenda, as she was endeavouring to escape—"never think shame for the matter, my girl. To be the mistress of some honest man's house, and the means of maintaining some old Norse name, making neighbours happy, the poor easy, and relieving strangers, is the most creditable lot a young woman can look to, and I heartily wish it to all here. Come, who speaks next—good husbands are going—Maddie Groatsettar—my pretty Clara, come and have your share."

The Lady Glowrowrum shook her head, and "could not," she said, "altogether approve——"

"Enough said—enough said," replied Magnus; "no compulsion; but the play shall go on till we are tired of it. Here, Minna—I have got you at command. Stand forth, my girl—there are plenty of things to be ashamed of besides old fashioned and innocent pleasantry—Come, I will speak for you myself—though I am not sure I can remember rhime enough for it."

There was a slight colour which passed rapidly over Minna's face, but she instantly regained her composure, and stood erect by her father, as one superior to any little jest to which her situation might give rise.

Her father, after some rubbing of his brow, and other mechanical efforts to assist his memory, at length recovered verse sufficient to put the following query, though in less gallant strains than those of Halcro :—

> "Mother speak, and do not tarry,
> Here's a maiden fain would marry.
> Shall she marry, ay or not?
> If she marry, what's her lot?"

A deep sigh was uttered within the tabernacle of the soothsayer, as if she compassionated the subject of the doom which she was obliged to pronounce. She then, as usual, returned her response.

> "Untouch'd by love, the maiden's breast
> Is like the snow on Rona's crest;
> So pure, so free from earthy dye,
> It seems, whilst leaning on the sky,
> Part of the heaven to which 'tis nigh;

But passion, like the wild March rain,
May soil the wreath with many a stain.
We gaze—the lovely vision's gone—
A torrent fills the bed of stone,
That hurrying to destruction's shock,
Leaps headlong from the lofty rock."

The Udaller heard this reply with high resentment. "By the bones of the Martyr," he said, his brave visage becoming suddenly ruddy, "this is an abuse of courtesy! and, were it any but yourself that had classed my daughter's name and the word destruction together, they had better have left the word unspoken. But, come forth of the tent, thou old galdragon," he added, with a smile—"I should have known that thou canst not long joy in any thing that smacks of mirth, God help thee." His summons received no answer; and after waiting a moment, he again addressed her—"Nay, never be sullen with me, kinswoman, though I did speak a hasty word—thou knowest I bear malice to no one, least of all to thee—so come forth and let us shake hands. —Thou mightest have foretold the wreck of my ship and boats, or a bad herring-fishery, and I

should have said never a word; but Minna or Brenda, you know, are things which touch me nearer. But come out, shake hands, and there let there be an end on't."

Norna returned no answer whatever to his repeated invocations, and the company began to look upon each other with some surprise, when the Udaller, raising the skin which covered the entrance of the tent, discovered that the interior was empty. The wonder was now general, and not unmixed with fear; for it seemed impossible that Norna could have, in any manner, escaped from the tabernacle in which she was inclosed without having been discovered by the company. Gone, however, she was, and the Udaller, after a moment's consideration, dropt the skin-curtain again over the entrance of the tent.

"My friends," he said, with a cheerful countenance, "we have long known my kinswoman, and that her ways are not like those of the ordinary folks of this world. But she means well by Hialtland, and hath the love of a sister for me, and for my house; and no guest of mine needs

either to fear evil, or to take offence at her hand. I have little doubt she will be with us at dinner time."

"Now, heaven forbid!" said Mrs Baby Yellowley—"for, my gude Leddy Glowrowrum, to tell your leddyship the truth, I likena cummers that can come and gae like a glance of the sun, or the whip of a whirlwind."

"Speak lower, speak lower," said the Lady Glowrowrum, "and be thankful that yon carlin hasna ta'en the house-side away wi' her. The like of her have played warse pranks, and so has she hersell, unless she is the sairer lied on."

Similar murmurs ran through the rest of the company, until the Udaller uplifted his stentorian and imperative voice to put them to silence, and invited, or rather commanded, the attendance of his guests to behold the boats set off for the *haaf* or deep-sea fishing.

"The wind had been high since sunrise," he said, "and had kept the boats in the bay, but now it was favourable, and they would sail immediately."

This sudden alteration of the weather occasioned sundry nods and winks amongst the guests, who were not indisposed to connect it with Norna's sudden disappearance; but without giving vent to observations which could not but be disagreeable to their host, they followed his stately step to the shore, as the herd of deer follows the leading stag, with all manner of respectful observance.

CHAPTER IX.

> There was a laughing devil in his sneer,
> That raised emotions both of rage and fear;
> And where his frown of hatred darkly fell,
> Hope withering fled—and Mercy sigh'd farewell.
>
> THE CORSAIR, *Canto I.*

THE ling or white fishery is the principal employment of the natives of Zetland, and was formerly that upon which the gentry chiefly depended for their income, and the poor for their subsistence. The fishing season is, therefore, like the harvest of an agricultural country, the busiest and most important, as well as the most animating period of the year.

The fishermen of each district assemble at particular stations, with their boats and crews, and erect upon the shore small huts, composed of shingle, and covered with turf, for their tempo-

rary lodging, and skeos, or drying-houses, for the fish; so that the lonely beach at once assumes the appearance of an Indian town. The banks to which they repair for the haaf fishing are often many miles distant from the station where the fish is dried; so that they are always twenty or thirty hours absent, frequently longer, and under unfavourable circumstances of wind and tide, they remain at sea with a very small stock of provisions, and in a boat of a construction which seems extremely slender, for two or three days, and are sometimes heard of no more. The departure of the fishers, therefore, on this occupation, has in it a character of danger and of suffering, which renders it dignified, and the anxiety of the females who remain on the beach, watching the departure of the lessening boat, or anxiously looking out for its return, gives pathos to the scene.*

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* Dr Edmondston, the ingenious author of a View of the Ancient and Present State of the Zetland Islands, has placed this part of the subject in an interesting light. "It is truly painful to witness the anxiety and distress which the wives of these poor men suffer on the approach of a storm. Regardless of fatigue, they leave their homes,

The scene, therefore, was in busy and anxious animation, when the Udaller and his friends appeared on the beach. The various crews of about thirty boats, amounting each to from three to five or six men, were taking leave of their wives and female relatives, and jumping on board their long Norway skiffs, where their lines and tackle lay ready stowed. Magnus was not an idle spectator of the scene; he went from one place to another inquiring into the state of their provisions for the voyage, and their preparations for the fishing—

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and fly to the spot where they expect their husbands to land, or ascend the summit of a rock, to look out for them on the bosom of the deep. Should they get the glimpse of a sail, they watch, with trembling solicitude, its alternate rise and disappearance on the waves; and though often tranquillized by the safe arrival of the objects of their search, yet it sometimes is their lot 'to hail the bark that never can return.' Subject to the influence of a variable climate, and engaged on a sea naturally tempestuous, with rapid currents, scarcely a season passes over without the occurrence of some fatal accident or hairbreadth escape."—*View, &c. of the Zetland Islands*, vol. I. p. 238. Many interesting particulars respecting the fisheries and agriculture of Zetland, as well as its antiquities, may be found in the work we have quoted.

now and then, with a rough Dutch or Norse oath, abusing them for blockheads, for going to sea with their boats indifferently found, but always ending by ordering from his own stores a gallon of gin, a lispund of meal, or some similar essential addition to their sea-stores. The hardy sailors, on receiving such favours, expressed their thanks in the brief gruff manner that their landlord best approved; but the women were more clamorous in their gratitude, which Magnus was often obliged to silence by cursing all female tongues from Eve's downwards.

At length all were on board and ready, the sails were hoisted, the signal for departure given, the rowers began to pull, and all started from the shore, in strong emulation to get first to the fishing ground, and to have their lines set before the rest; an exploit to which no little consequence was attached by the boat's crew who should be happy enough to perform it.

While they were yet within hearing of the shore, they chaunted an ancient Norse ditty, appropriate to the occasion, of which Claud Halcro had executed the following literal translation:

"Farewell, merry maidens, to dance, song, and laugh,
For the brave lads of Westra are bound to the Haaf;
And we must have labour, and hunger, and pain,
Ere we dance with the maids of Dunrossness again.

"For now, in our trim boats of Noroway deal,
We must dance on the waves, with the porpuss and seal.
The breeze it shall pipe, so it pipe not too high,
And the gull be our songstress whene'er she flits by.

"Sing on, my brave bird, while we follow, like thee,
By bank, shoal, and quicksand, the swarms of the sea;
And when twenty-score fishes are straining my line,
Sing louder, brave bird, for their spoils shall be thine.

"We'll sing while we bait, and we'll sing when we haul,
For the deeps of the Haaf have enough for us all:
There is torsk for the gentle, and skate for the carle,
And there's wealth for bold Magnus, the son of the earl.

"Huzza! my brave comrades, give way for the Haaf,
We shall sooner come back to the dance and the laugh;
For life without mirth is a lamp without oil;
Then, mirth and long life to the bold Magnus Troil!"

The rude words of the song were soon drowned in the ripple of the waves, but the tune con-

tinued long to mingle with the sound of wind and sea, and the boats were like so many black specks on the surface of the ocean, diminishing by degrees as they bore far and farther seaward; while the ear could distinguish touches of the human voice, almost drowned amid that of the elements.

The fishermens' wives looked their last after the parting sails, and were now departing slowly, with downcast and anxious looks, towards the huts in which they were to make arrangements for preparing and drying the fish, with which they hoped to see their husbands and friends return deeply loaded. Here and there an old sybil displayed the superior importance of her experience, by predicting, from the appearance of the atmosphere, that the wind would be fair or foul, while others recommended a vow to the Kirk of Saint Ninian's, for the safety of their men and boats, (an ancient Catholic superstition, not yet wholly abolished;) and others, but in a low and timorous tone, regretted to their companions, that Norna of Fitful-head had been suffered to depart in discontent that morning from Burgh-Westra, "and, of all days that were

in the year, that they suld have contrived to give her displeasure on the first day of the white fishing!"

The gentry, guests of Magnus Troil, having whiled away as much time as could be so disposed of, in viewing the little armament set sail, and in conversing with the poor women who had seen their friends embark in it, began now to separate into various groups and parties, which strolled in different directions, as fancy led them, to enjoy what may be called the clear obscure of a Zetland summer day, which, though wanting the brilliant sunshine that cheers other countries during the fine season, has a mild and pleasing character of its own, which softens while it saddens landscapes, which, in their own lonely, bare, and monotonous tone, have something in them stern as well as barren.

In one of the loneliest recesses of the coast, where a deep indenture of the rocks gave the tide access to the cavern, or, as it is called, the *Helyer* of Swartaster, Minna Troil was walking with Captain Cleveland. They had chosen probably that walk, as being little liable to interrup-

tion from others; for as the force of the tide rendered the place unfit either for fishing or sailing, so it was not the ordinary resort of walkers, on account of its being the supposed habitation of a Mermaid, a race which Norwegian superstition invests with magical as well as mischievous qualities. Here, therefore, Minna wandered with her lover.

A small spot of milk-white sand, that stretched beneath one of the precipices which walled in the creek on either side, afforded them space for a dry, firm, and pleasant walk of about an hundred yards, terminated at one extremity by a dark stretch of the bay, which, scarce touched by the wind, seemed almost as smooth as glass, and which was seen from between two lofty rocks, the jaws of the creek, or indenture, which approached each other above, as if they wished to meet over the dark tide that separated them. The other end of their promenade was closed by a lofty and almost unscaleable precipice, the abode of hundreds of sea-fowl of different kinds, in the bottom of which the huge helyer, or sea-cave, itself yawned, as if for the purpose of swallowing

up the advancing tide, which it seemed to receive into an abyss of immeasurable depth and extent. The entrance to this dismal cavern consisted not in a single arch, as usual, but was divided into two, by a huge pillar of natural rock, which, rising out of the sea, and extending to the top of the cavern, seemed to lend its support to the roof, and thus formed a double portal to the helyer, on which the fishermen and peasants had bestowed the rude name of the Devil's Nostrils. In this wild scene, lonely and undisturbed but by the clang of the sea-fowl, Cleveland had already met with Minna Troil more than once; for with her it was a favourite walk, as the objects which it presented agreed peculiarly with her love of the wild, the melancholy, and the wonderful. But now the conversation in which she was earnestly engaged, was such as entirely to withdraw her attention, as well as that of her companion, from the scenery around them.

"You cannot deny it," she said; "you have given way to feelings respecting this young man which indicate prejudice and violence,—the pre-

judice unmerited, as far as you are concerned at east, and the violence equally imprudent and unjustifiable."

"I should have thought," replied Cleveland, "that the service I rendered him yesterday might have freed me from such a charge. I do not talk of my own risk, for I have lived in danger, and love it; it is not every one, however, would have ventured so near the furious animal to save one with whom they had no connection."

"It is not every one, indeed, who could have done so," answered Minna, gravely; "but it is every one who has courage and generosity. The giddy-brained Claud Halcro would have done as much as you, had his strength been equal to his courage,—my father would have done as much, though having such just cause of resentment against the young man, for his vain and braggart abuse of our hospitality. Do not, therefore, boast of your exploit too much, my good friend, lest you should make me think that it required too great an effort. I know you love not Mordaunt Mertoun, though you exposed your own life to save his."

"Will you allow nothing, then," said Cleveland, "for the long misery I was made to endure from the common and prevailing report, that this beardless bird-hunter stood betwixt me and what I on earth coveted most—the affections of Minna Troil?"

He spoke in a tone at once impassioned and insinuating, and his whole language and manner seemed to express a grace and elegance, which formed the most striking contrast with the speech and gesture of the unpolished seaman, which he usually affected or exhibited. But his apology was unsatisfactory to Minna.

"You have known," she said, "perhaps too soon, and too well, how little you had to fear,—if you indeed feared,—that Mertoun, or any other, had interest with Minna Troil.—Nay, truce to thanks and protestations; I would accept it as the best proof of gratitude, that you would be reconciled with this youth, or at least avoid every quarrel with him."

"That we should be friends, Minna, is impossible," replied Cleveland; "even the love I

bear you, the most powerful emotion that my heart ever knew, cannot work that miracle."

"And why, I pray you?" said Minna; "there have been no evil offices between you, but rather an exchange of mutual services; why can you not be friends?—I have many reasons to wish it."

"And can you then forget the slights which he has cast upon Brenda, and on yourself, and on your father's house?"

"I can forgive them all," said Minna;—"can you not say so much, who have in truth received no offence?"

Cleveland looked down, and paused for an instant, then raised his head and replied, "I might easily deceive you, Minna, and promise you what my soul tells me is an impossibility; but I am forced to use too much deceit with others, and with you I will use none. I cannot be friend to this young man;—there is a natural dislike—an instinctive aversion—a something like a principle of repugnance in our mutual nature, which makes us odious to each other. Ask himself—he will tell you he has the same antipathy against me. The obligation he conferred on me was a bridle

to my resentment; but I was so galled by the restraint, that I could have gnawed the curb tilmy lips were bloody."

"You have worn what you are wont to call your iron mask so long, that your features," replied Minna, "retain the impression of its rigidity, even when it is removed."

"You do me injustice, Minna," replied her lover, "and you are angry with me because I deal with you plainly and honestly. Plainly and honestly, however, will I say, that I cannot be Mertoun's friend, but it shall be his own fault, not mine, if I am ever his enemy. I seek not to injure him, but do not ask me to love him. And of this remain satisfied, that it would be vain even if I could do so; for as sure as I attempted any advances towards his confidence, so sure would I be to awaken his disgust and suspicion. Leave us to the exercise of our natural feelings, which, as they will unquestionably keep us as far separate as possible, are most likely to prevent any possible interference with each other.—Does this satisfy you?"

"It must," said Minna, "since you tell me

there is no remedy.—And now tell me why you looked so grave when you heard of your consort's arrival, for that it is her I have no doubt, in the port of Kirkwall ?"

"I fear," replied Cleveland, "the consequences of that vessel's arrival with her crew, as comprehending the ruin of my fondest hopes. I had made some progress in your father's favour, and, with time, might have made more, when hither come Allured and Hawkins to blight my prospects for ever. I told you on what terms we parted. I then commanded a vessel braver and better found than their own, with a crew who, at my slightest nod, would have faced fiends armed with their own fiery element; but I now stand alone, a single man, destitute of all means to overawe or to restrain them; and they will soon shew so plainly the ungovernable license of their habits and dispositions, that ruin to themselves and me will in all probability be the consequence."

"Do not fear it," said Minna; "my father can never be so unjust as to hold you liable for the offences of others."

"But what will Magnus Troil say to my own, fair Minna?" said Cleveland, smiling.

"My father is a Norwegian," said Minna, "one of an oppressed race, who will not care whether you fought against the Spaniards, who are the tyrants of the New World, or against the Dutch and English, who have succeeded to their usurped dominions. His own ancestors supported and exercised the freedom of the seas in those gallant barks, whose pennons were the dread of all Europe."

"I fear, nevertheless," said Cleveland, smiling, "that the descendant of an ancient Sea-King will scarce acknowledge a fitting acquaintance in a modern rover. I have not disguised from you that I have reason to fear the English laws; and Magnus, though a great enemy to taxes, imposts, scatt, wattle, and so forth, has no idea of latitude upon points of a more general character;—he would willingly reeve a rope to the yard-arm for the benefit of an unfortunate buccaneer."

"Do not suppose so," said Minna; "he himself suffers too much oppression from the tyrannical laws of our proud neighbours of Scotland.

I trust he will soon be able to rise in resistance agaist them. The enemy—such I will call them—are now divided amongst themselves, and every vessel from their coast brings intelligence of fresh commotions—the Highlands against the Lowlands—the Williamites against the Jacobites—the Whigs against the Tories, and, to sum the whole, the kingdom of England against that of Scotland. What is there, as Claud Halcro well hinted, to prevent our availing ourselves of the quarrels of these robbers, to assert the independence of which we are deprived?"

"To hoist the raven standard on the Castle of Scalloway," said Cleveland, in imitation of her tone and manner, "and proclaim your father Earl Magnus the First!"

"Earl Magnus the Seventh, if it please you," replied Minna; "for six of his ancestors have worn the coronet before him.—You laugh at my ardour,—but what *is* there to prevent all this?"

"Nothing *will* prevent it," replied Cleveland, "because it will never be attempted—Any thing *might* prevent it, that is equal in strength to the long-boat of a British man-of-war."

"You treat us with scorn, sir," replied Minna; "yet yourself should know what a few resolved men may perform."

"But they must be armed, Minna," replied Cleveland, "and willing to place their lives upon each desperate adventure.—Think not of such visions. Denmark has been cut down into a second-rate kingdom, incapable of exchanging a single broadside with England; and, in these islands, the love of independence has been suppressed by a long term of subjection, or shews itself but in a few muttered growls over the bowl and bottle.—And, were your men as willing warriors as their ancestors, what could the unarmed crews of a few fishing-boats do against the British navy?—Think no more of it, sweet Minna—it is a dream, and I must term it so, though it makes your eye so bright, and your step so noble."

"It is indeed a dream!" said Minna, looking down, "and it ill becomes a daughter of Hialtland to look or to move like a free woman—Our eye should be on the ground, and our step slow and reluctant, as that of one who obeys a taskmaster."

"There are lands," said Cleveland, "in which the eye may look bright upon groves of the palm and the cocoa, and where the foot may move light as a galley under sail, over fields carpetted with flowers, and savannahs surrounded by aromatic thickets, and where subjection is unknown, except that of the brave to the bravest, and of all to the most beautiful."

Minna paused a moment ere she replied, and then answered, "No, Cleveland. My own rude country has charms for me, even desolate as you think it, and depressed as it surely is, which no other land on earth can present to me. I endeavour in vain to represent to myself those visions of trees, and of groves, which my eye never saw; but my imagination can conceive no sight in nature more sublime than those waves, when agitated by a storm, or more beautiful, than when they come, as they now do, rolling in calm tranquillity to the shore. Not the fairest scene in a foreign land,—not the brightest sun-beam that ever shone upon the richest landscape, would win my thoughts for a moment from that lofty rock, misty hill, and wide-rolling ocean. Hialtland is

the land of my deceased ancestors, and of my living father; and in Hialtland will I live and die."

"Then in Hialtland," answered Cleveland, "will I too live and die. I will not go to Kirkwall,—I will not make my existence known to my comrades, from whom it were else hard for me to escape. Your father loves me, Minna; who knows whether long attention, anxious care might not bring him to receive me into his family. Who would regard the length of a voyage that was certain to terminate in happiness?"

"Dream not of such an issue," said Minna; "it is impossible. While you live in my father's house,—while you receive his assistance, and share his table, you will find him the generous friend, and the hearty host; but touch him on what concerns his name and family, and the frank-hearted Udaller will start up before you the haughty and proud descendant of a Norwegian Jarl. See you, a moment's suspicion has fallen on Mordaunt Mertoun, and he has banished from his favour the youth whom he so lately loved as a son. No one must ally with his house that is not of untainted northern descent."

"And mine may be so, for aught that is known to me upon the subject," said Cleveland.

"How!" said Minna; "have you any reason to believe yourself of Norse descent?"

"I have told you before," replied Cleveland, "that my family is totally unknown to me. I spent my earliest days upon a solitary plantation, in the little island of Tortuga, under the charge of my father, then a different person from what he afterwards became. We were plundered by the Spaniards, and reduced to such extremity of poverty, that my father, in desperation, and in thirst of revenge, took up arms, and having become chief of a little band, who were in the same circumstances, became a buccaneer, as it is called, and cruized against Spain, with various vicissitudes of good and bad fortune, until, while he interfered to check some violence of his companions, he fell by their hands—no uncommon fate among the captains of these rovers. But whence my father came, or what was the place of his birth, I know not, fair Minna, nor have I ever had a curious thought on the subject."

"He was a Briton, at least, your unfortunate father?" said Minna.

"I have no doubt of it," said Cleveland; "his name, which I have rendered too formidable to be openly spoken, is an English one; and his acquaintance with the English language, and even with English literature, together with the pains which he took, in better days, to teach me both, plainly spoke him to be an Englishman. If the rude bearing which I display towards others is not the genuine character of my mind and manners, it is to my father, Minna, that I owe any share of better thoughts and principles, which may render me worthy, in some small degree, of your notice and approbation. And yet it sometimes seems to me, that I have two different characters; for I cannot almost believe, that I, who now walk this lone beach with the lovely Minna Troil, and am permitted to speak to her of the passion which I have cherished, have ever been the daring leader of the bold band whose name was as terrible as a tornado."

"You had not been permitted," said Minna, "to use that bold language towards the daugh-

ter of Magnus Troil, had you *not* been the brave and undaunted leader, who, with so small means, has made his name so formidable. My heart is like that of a maiden of the ancient days, and is to be won, not by fair words, but by gallant deeds."

"Alas! that heart," said Cleveland; "and what is it that I may do—what is it that man can do, to win in it the interest which I desire?"

"Rejoin your friends—pursue your fortunes—leave the rest to destiny," said Minna. "Should you return, the leader of a gallant fleet, who can tell what may befal?"

"And what shall assure me, that, when I return—if return I ever shall—I may not find Minna Troil a bride or a spouse?—No, Minna, I will not trust to destiny the only object worth attaining, which my stormy voyage in life has yet offered me."

"Hear me," said Minna. "I will bind myself to you, if you dare accept such an engagement, by the promise of Odin, the most sacred of our northern rites which are yet practised amongst us, that I will never favour another, until you

resign the pretensions which I have given to you. —Will that satisfy you?—for more I cannot—more I will not give."

"Then with that," said Cleveland, after a moment's pause, "I must perforce be satisfied;—but remember, it is yourself that threw me back upon a mode of life which the laws of Britain denounce as criminal, and which the violent passions of the daring men by whom it is pursued, have rendered infamous."

"But I," said Minna, "am superior to such prejudices. In warring with England, I see their laws in no other light than as if you were engaged with an enemy, who, in fulness of pride and power, has declared he will give his antagonist no quarter. A brave man will not fight the worse of this;—and, for the manners of your comrades, so that they do not infect your own, why should their evil report attach to you?"

Cleveland gazed at her as she spoke, with a degree of wondering admiration, in which, at the same time, there lurked a smile at her simplicity.

"I could not," he said, "have believed, that such high courage could have been found united

with such ignorance of the world, as the world is now wielded. For my manners, they who best know me will readily allow, that I have done my best, at the risk of my popularity, and of my life itself, to mitigate the ferocity of my mates; but how can you teach humanity to men burning with vengeance against the world, by whom they are proscribed, or learn them temperance and moderation in enjoying the pleasures which chance throws in their way, to vary a life which would be otherwise one constant scene of peril and hardship? But this promise, Minna—this promise, which is all I am to receive in guerdon for my faithful attachment—let me at least lose no time in claiming it."

"It must not be rendered here, but in Kirkwall.—We must invoke, to witness the engagement, the Spirit which presides over the ancient circle of Stennis. But perhaps you fear to name the ancient Father of the Slain too, the Severe, the Terrible."

Cleveland smiled.

"Do me the justice to think, lovely Minna,

that I am little subject to fear real causes of terror; and for those which are visionary, I have no sympathy whatsoever."

"You believe not in them, then," said Minna, "and are so far better suited to be Brenda's lover than mine."

"I will believe," replied Cleveland, "in whatever you believe. The whole inhabitants of that Valhalla, about which you converse so much with that fiddling, rhiming fool, Claud Halcro—all these shall become living and existing things to my credulity. But, Minna, do not ask me to fear any of them."

"Fear! no—not to *fear* them, surely," replied the maiden; "for, not before Thor or Odin, when they approached in the fulness of their terrors, did the heroes of my dauntless race yield one foot in retreat. But when you make this boast, bethink you that you defy an enemy of a kind you have never yet encountered."

"Not in these northern latitudes," said the lover, with a smile, "where hitherto I have seen but angels; but I have faced, in my time, the demons

of the Equinoctial Line, which we rovers suppose to be as powerful, and as malignant, as those of the North."

"Have you then witnessed those wonders that are beyond the visible world?" said Minna, with some degree of awe.

Cleveland composed his countenance, and replied,—"A short while before my father's death, I came, though then very young, into the command of a sloop, manned with thirty as desperate fellows as ever handled a musket. We cruized for a long while with bad success, taking nothing but wretched small-craft, which were destined to catch turtle, or otherwise loaded with coarse and worthless trumpery. I had much ado to prevent my comrades from avenging upon the crews of those baubling shallops the disappointment which they had occasioned to us. At length, we grew desperate, and made a descent on a village where we were told we should intercept the mules of a certain Spanish governor, laden with treasure. We succeeded in carrying the place; but while I endeavoured to save the inhabitants from the fury of my followers, the muleteers, with their

precious cargo, escaped into the neighbouring woods. This filled up the measure of my unpopularity. My people, who had been long discontented, became openly mutinous. I was deposed from my command, in solemn council, and condemned, as having too little luck and too much humanity for the profession I had undertaken, to be marooned,* as the phrase goes, on one of those little sandy, bushy islets, which are called, in the West Indies, keys, and which are frequented only by turtle and by sea-fowl. Many of them are supposed to be haunted—some by the demons worshipped by the old inhabitants—others by Caciques and others, whom the Spaniards had put to death by torture, to compel them to discover their hidden treasures, and others by the various spectres in which sailors of all nations have implicit faith. My place of banishment, called Coffin-key, about two leagues and a half to the south-east of Bermudas, was so infamous as the

* To *maroon* a seaman, signified to abandon him on a desolate coast or island—a piece of cruelty often practised by Pirates and Buccaneers.

resort of these supernatural inhabitants, that I believe the wealth of Mexico would not have persuaded the bravest of the scoundrels who put me ashore there, to have spent an hour on the islet alone, even in broad day-light; and when they rowed off, they pulled for the sloop like men that dared not cast their eyes behind them. And there they left me to subsist myself as I might, on a speck of unproductive sand, surrounded by the boundless Atlantic, and haunted, as they supposed, by malignant demons."

"And what was the consequence?" said Minna, eagerly.

"I supported life," said the adventurer, "at the expence of such sea-fowl as were silly enough to let me approach so near as to knock them down with a stick; and by means of turtle eggs, when these complaisant birds became better acquainted with the mischievous disposition of the human species, and more shy of course of my advances."

"And the demons of whom you spoke?"—continued Minna.

"I had my secret apprehensions upon their account," said Cleveland: "In open day-light,

or in absolute darkness, I did not greatly apprehend their approach; but in the misty dawn of the morning, or when evening was about to fall, I saw, for the first week of my abode on the key, many a dim and undefined spectre,—now resembling a Spaniard, with his capa wrapped around him, and his huge sombrera, as large as an umbrella, upon his head,—now a Dutch sailor, with his rough cap and trunk-hose,—and now an Indian Cacique, with his feathery crown and long lance of cane."

"Did you not approach and address them?" said Minna.

"I always approached them," replied the seaman; "but,—I grieve to disappoint your expectations, my fair friend,—whenever I drew near them the phantom changed into a bush, or a piece of drift-wood, or a wreath of mist, or some such cause of deception, until at last I was taught by experience to cheat myself no longer with such visions, and continued a solitary inhabitant of Coffin-key, as little alarmed by visionary terrors, as I ever was in the great cabin of a stout vessel, with a score of companions around me."

"You cheated me into listening to a tale of nothing," said Minna; "but how long did you continue on the island?"

"Four weeks of miserable existence," said Cleveland, "when I was relieved by the crew of a vessel which came thither a-turtling. Yet my miserable seclusion was not entirely useless to me, for on that spot of barren sand I found the iron mask, which has since been my chief security against treason, or mutiny of my followers. It was there I formed the resolution to seem no softer hearted, nor better instructed—no more humane, and no more scrupulous, than those with whom fortune had leagued me. I thought over my former story, and saw that seeming more brave, skilful, and enterprizing than others, had gained me command and respect, and that seeming more gently nurtured, and more civilized than they, had made them envy and hate me as a being of another species. I agreed with myself, then, that since I could not lay aside my superiority of intellect and education, I would do my best to disguise, and to sink in the rude seaman, all appearance of better feeling and better accom-

plishments. I foresaw then what has since happened, that, under the appearance of daring obduracy, I should acquire such a habitual command over my followers, that I might use it for the ensurance of discipline, and for relieving the distresses of the wretches who fell under our power. I saw, in short, that, to attain authority, I must assume the external semblance, at least, of those over whom it was to be exercised. The tidings of my father's fate, while it excited me to wrath and to revenge, confirmed the resolution I had adopted. He also had fallen a victim to his superiority of mind, morals, and manners, above those whom he commanded. They were wont to call him the Gentleman; and, unquestionably, they thought he waited some favourable opportunity to reconcile himself, perhaps at their expence, with those existing forms of society with which his habits seemed best to suit, and, even therefore, they murdered him. Nature and justice alike called on me for revenge. I was soon at the head of a new body of the adventurers, who are so numerous in those islands. I sought not after those by whom I had been myself maroon-

ed, but after the wretches who had betrayed my father; and on them I took a revenge so severe, that it was of itself sufficient to stamp me with the character of that inexorable ferocity which I was desirous to be thought to possess, and which, perhaps, was gradually coming on my disposition in actual earnest. My manner, speech, and conduct, seemed so totally changed, that those who formerly knew me were disposed to ascribe the alteration to my intercourse with the demons who haunted the sands of Coffin-key; nay, there were some, superstitious enough to believe that I had actually formed a league with them."

"I tremble to hear the rest!" said Minna; "did you not become the monster of courage and cruelty whose character you assumed?"

"If I have escaped being so, it is to you, Minna," replied Cleveland, "that the wonder must be ascribed. It is true, I have always endeavoured to distinguish myself rather by acts of the most adventurous valour, than by schemes of revenge or of plunder, and that at length I could save lives by a rude jest, and sometimes, by the

excess of the measures which I myself proposed, could induce those under me to intercede in favour of prisoners; so that the seeming severity of my character has better served the cause of humanity, than had I appeared directly devoted to it."

He ceased, and, as Minna replied not a word, both remained silent for a little space, when Cleveland again resumed the discourse:—

"You are silent," he said, "Miss Troil, and I have injured myself in your opinion by the frankness with which I have laid my character before you. I may truly say that my natural disposition has been controlled, but not altered, by the untoward circumstances in which I am placed."

"I am uncertain," said Minna, after a moment's consideration, "whether you had been thus candid, had you not known I should soon see your comrades, and discover from their conversation and their manners what you would otherwise gladly have concealed."

"You do me injustice, Minna, cruel injustice. From the instant that you knew me to be a sailor

of fortune, an adventurer, a buccaneer, or, if you will have the broad word, a PIRATE, what had you to expect less than what I have told you?"

"You speak too truly," said Minna—"all this I might have anticipated, and I know not how I should have expected it otherwise. But it seemed to me that a war on the cruel and superstitious Spaniards had in it something ennobling—something that refined the fierce employment to which you have just now given its true and dreaded name. I thought that the independent warriors of the Western Ocean, raised up, as it were, to punish the wrongs of so many murdered and plundered tribes, must have had something of noble elevation, like the Sons of the North, whose long galleys avenged on so many coasts the oppressions of degenerate Rome. This I thought, and this I dreamed—I grieve that I am awakened and undeceived. Yet I blame you not for the erring of my own fancy.—Farewell, we must now part."

"Say at least," said Cleveland, "that you do not hold me in horror for having told you the truth."

"I must have time for reflection," said Minna, "time to weigh what you have said, ere I can fully understand my own feelings. Thus much, however, I can say even now, that he who pursues the wicked purpose of plunder, by means of blood and cruelty, and who must veil his remains of natural remorse under an affectation of superior profligacy, is not, and cannot be, the lover whom Minna Troil expected to find in Cleveland; and if she still love him, it must be as a penitent, and not as a hero."

So saying, she extricated herself from his grasp, (for he still endeavoured to detain her,) making an imperative sign to him to forbear from following her.—"She is gone," said Cleveland, looking after her; "wild and fanciful as she is, I was unprepared for this.—She startled not at the name of my perilous course of life, yet seems totally unprepared for the evil which must necessarily attend it; and so all the merit I have gained with my resemblance to a Norse Champion, or King of the Sea, is to be lost at once, because a gang of pirates do not prove to be a choir of saints. I would that Rackam, Hawkins, and the rest, had been at

the bottom of the Race of Portland—I would the Pentland Firth had swept them to hell rather than to Orkney! I will not, however, quit the chase of this angel for all that these fiends can do. I will—I must to Orkney before the Udaller makes his voyage thither—our meeting might alarm even his blunt understanding, although, thank Heaven, in this wild country, men know the nature of our trade only by hearsay, through our honest friends the Dutch, who take care never to speak very ill of those they make money by.—Well, if fortune would but stand my friend with this beautiful enthusiast, I would pursue her wheel no further at sea, but set myself down amongst these rocks, as happy as if they were so many groves of bananas and palmettoes."

With these, and such thoughts, half rolling in his bosom, half expressed in indistinct hints and murmurs, the pirate Cleveland returned to the mansion of Burgh-Westra.

CHAPTER X.

There was shaking of hands, and sorrow of heart,
For the hour was approaching when merry folks must part;
So we call'd for our horses, and ask'd for our way,
While the jolly old landlord said, "Nothing's to pay."
Liliput, a Poem.

We do not dwell upon the festivities of the day, which had nothing in them to interest the reader particularly. The table groaned under the usual plenty, which was disposed of by the guests with the usual appetite—the bowl of punch was filled and emptied with the same celerity as usual—the men quaffed, and the women laughed—Claud Halcro rhimed, punned, and praised John Dryden—the Udaller bumpered and sung choruses—and the evening concluded, as usual, in the Rigging-loft, as it was Magnus Troil's pleasure to term the dancing apartment.

It was then and there that Cleveland, approaching Magnus, where he sat betwixt his two daughters, intimated his intention of going to Kirkwall in a small brig, which Bryce Snaelsfoot, who had disposed of his goods with unprecedented celerity, had freighted thither, to procure a supply.

Magnus heard the sudden proposal of his guest with surprise, not unmingled with displeasure, and demanded sharply of Cleveland, how long it was since he had learned to prefer Bryce Snaelsfoot's company to his own. Cleveland answered, with his usual bluntness of manner, that time and tide tarried for no one, and that he had his own particular reasons for making his trip to Kirkwall sooner than the Udaller proposed to set sail—that he hoped to meet with him and his daughters at the great fair, which was now closely approaching, and might perhaps find it possible to return to Zetland along with them.

While he spoke this, Brenda kept her eye as much upon her sister as it was possible to do, without exciting general observation. She remarked, that Minna's pale cheek became yet paler while Cleveland spoke, and that she seemed,

by compressing her lips, and slightly knitting her brows, to be in the act of repressing the effects of strong interior emotion. But she spoke not; and when Cleveland, having bidden adieu to the Udaller, approached to salute her, as was then the custom, she received his farewell without trusting herself to attempt a reply.

Brenda had her own trial approaching; for Mordaunt Mertoun, once so much loved by her father, was now in the act of making his cold parting from him, without receiving a single look of friendly regard. There was, indeed, sarcasm in the tone with which Magnus wished the youth a good journey, and recommended to him, if he met a bonny lass by the way, not to dream that she was in love, because she chanced to laugh at him. Mertoun coloured at what he felt as an insult, though it was but half intelligible to him; but he remembered Brenda, and suppressed every feeling of resentment. He proceeded to take his leave of the sisters. Minna, whose heart was considerably softened towards him, received his farewell with some degree of interest; but Brenda's was so

visible in the kindness of her manner, and the moisture which gathered in her eye, that it was noticed even by the Udaller, who exclaimed, half-angrily, "Why, ay, lass, that may be right enow, for he was an old acquaintance; but mind! I have no will that he remain one."

Mertoun, who was slowly leaving the apartment, half overheard this disparaging observation, and half turned round to resent it. But his purpose failed him when he saw that Brenda had been obliged to have recourse to her handkerchief to hide her emotion, and the sense that it was excited by his departure, obliterated every thought of her father's unkindness. He retired, —the other guests followed his example; and many of them, like Cleveland and himself, took their leave over-night, with the purpose of commencing their homeward journey on the succeeding morning.

That night, the mutual sorrow of Minna and Brenda, if it could not wholly remove the reserve which had estranged the sisters from each other, at least melted all its frozen and unkindly symptoms. They wept in each other's arms; and

though neither spoke, yet each became dearer to the other; because they felt that the grief which called forth these drops had a source common to them both.

It is probable, that though Brenda's tears were most abundant, the grief of Minna was most deeply seated; for long after the younger had sobbed herself asleep, like a child, upon her sister's bosom, Minna lay awake, watching the dubious twilight, while tear after tear slowly gathered in her eye, and found a current down her cheek, as soon as it became too heavy to be supported by her long black silken eye-lashes. As she lay, bewildered among the sorrowful thoughts which supplied these tears, she was surprised to distinguish, beneath the window, the sounds of music. At first she supposed it was some freak of Claud Halcro, whose fantastic humour sometimes indulged itself in such serenades. But it was not the *gue* of the old minstrel, but the guitar which she heard; an instrument which none in the island knew how to touch except Cleveland, who had learned, in his intercourse with the South American Spaniards, to play on it with superior exe-

cution. Perhaps it was in these climates also that he had learned the song, which, though he now sung it under the window of a maiden of Thule, had certainly never been composed for the native of a climate so northerly and so severe, since it spoke of productions of the earth and skies which are there unknown.

1.

"Love wakes and weeps
While Beauty sleeps!
O for Music's softest numbers,
To prompt a theme,
For Beauty's dream,
Soft as the pillow of her slumbers.

2.

"Through groves of palm
Sigh gales of balm,
Fire-flies on the air are wheeling;
While through the gloom
Comes soft perfume,
The distant beds of flowers revealing.

3.

"O wake and live,
No dream can give

A shadow'd bliss, the real excelling;
No longer sleep,
From lattice peep,
And list the tale that Love is telling."

The voice of Cleveland was deep, rich, and manly, and accorded well with the Spanish air, to which the words, probably a translation from the same language, had been adapted. His invocation would not probably have been fruitless, could Minna have arisen without awakening her sister. But that was impossible; for Brenda, who, as we already mentioned, had wept bitterly before she had sunk into repose, now lay with her face on her sister's neck, and one arm stretched around her, in the attitude of a child which has cried itself asleep in the arms of her nurse. It was impossible for Minna to extricate herself from her grasp without awaking her; and she could not, therefore, execute her hasty purpose, of donning her gown, and hastening to the window to speak with Cleveland, who, she had no doubt, had resorted to this contrivance, to procure an interview. The restraint was sufficiently provoking, for it was more than probable that

her lover came to take his last farewell; but that Brenda, inimical as she seemed to be of late towards Cleveland, should awake and witness it, was a thought not to be endured.

There was a short pause, in which Minna endeavoured more than once, with as much gentleness as possible, to unclasp Brenda's arm from her neck; but whenever she attempted it the slumberer muttered some little pettish sound, like a child disturbed in its sleep, which sufficiently shewed that perseverance in the attempt would awaken her fully.

To her great vexation, therefore, Minna was compelled to remain still and silent; when her lover, as if determined upon gaining her ear by music of another strain, sung the following fragment of a sea-ditty.

"Farewell! Farewell! the voice you hear,
Has left its last soft tone with you,—
Its next must join the seaward cheer,
And shout among the shouting crew.

"The accents which I scarce could form
Beneath your frown's controuling check,
Must give the word, above the storm,
To cut the mast, and clear the wreck.

"The timid eye I dared not raise,—
The hand, that shook when press'd to thine,
Must point the guns upon the chase,—
Must bid the deadly cutlass shine.

"To all I love, or hope, or fear,—
Honour, or own, a long adieu!
To all that life has soft and dear,
Farewell! save memory of you!"

He was again silent; and again she, to whom the serenade was addressed, strove in vain to arise without rousing her sister. It was impossible; and she had nothing before her but the unhappy thought that Cleveland was taking leave in his desolation, without a single glance, or a single word. He, too, whose temper was so fiery, yet who subjected his violent mood with such sedulous attention to her will,—could she but have stolen a moment but to say adieu—to caution him against new quarrels with Mertoun—to implore him to detach himself from such comrades as he had described,—could she but have done this, who could say what effect such parting admonitions might have had upon his character—nay, upon the future events of his life?

Tantalized by such thoughts, Minna was about to make another and decisive effort, when she heard voices beneath the window, and thought she could distinguish that they were those of Cleveland and Mertoun, speaking in a sharp tone, which, at the same time, seemed cautiously suppressed, as if the speakers feared being overheard. Alarm now mingled with her former desire to rise from bed, and she accomplished at once the purpose which she had so often attempted in vain. Brenda's arm was unloosed from her sister's neck, without the sleeper receiving more alarm than provoked two or three unintelligible murmurs; while, with equal speed and silence, Minna put on some part of her dress, with the intention to steal to the window. But, ere she could accomplish this, the sound of the voices without was exchanged for that of blows and struggling, which terminated suddenly by a deep groan.

Terrified at this last signal of mischief, Minna sprung to the window, and endeavoured to open it, for the persons were so close under the walls of the house that she could not see them, save by putting her head out of the casement. The

iron hasp was stiff and rusted, and, as generally happens, the haste with which she laboured to undo it only rendered the task more difficult. When it was accomplished, and Minna had eagerly thrust her body half out at the casement, those who had created the sounds which alarmed her were become invisible, excepting that she saw a shadow cross the moonlight, the substance of which must have been in the act of turning a corner, which concealed it from her sight. The shadow moved slowly, and seemed that of a man who supported another upon his shoulders; an indication which put the climax to Minna's agony of mind. The window was not above eight feet from the ground, and she hesitated not to throw herself from it hastily, and to pursue the object which had excited her terror.

But when she came to the corner of the buildings from which the shadow seemed to have been projected, she discovered nothing which could point out the way that the figure had gone; and, after a moment's consideration, became sensible that all attempts at pursuit would be alike wild and fruitless. Besides all the projections and re-

cesses of the many-angled mansion, and its numerous offices—besides the various cellars, storehouses, stables, and so forth, which defied her solitary search, there was a range of low rocks, stretching down to the little haven, and which were, in fact, a continuation of the ridge which formed its pier. These rocks had many indentures, hollows, and caverns, into any one of which the figure to which the shadow belonged might have retired with his fatal burden; for fatal, she feared, it was most likely to prove.

A moment's reflection, as we have said, convinced Minna of the folly of further pursuit; her next thought was to alarm the family; but what tale had she to tell, and of whom was that tale to be told?—On the other hand, the wounded man—if indeed he was wounded—alas, if indeed he were not mortally wounded,—might not be past the reach of assistance; and, with this idea, she was about to raise her voice, when she was interrupted by that of Claud Halcro, who was returning apparently from the haven, and singing, in his manner, a scrap of an old Norse ditty, which might run thus in English:—

"And you shall deal the funeral dole;
Ay, deal it, mother mine,
To weary body, and to heavy soul,
The white bread and the wine.

"And you shall deal my horses of pride;
Ay, deal them, mother mine;
And you shall deal my lands so wide,
And deal my castles nine.

"But deal not vengeance for the deed,
And deal not for the crime;
The body to its place, and the soul to Heaven's grace,
And the rest in God's own time."

The singular adaptation of these rhimes to the situation in which she found herself, seemed to Minna like a warning from heaven. We are speaking of a land of omens and superstitions, and perhaps will scarce be understood by those whose limited imagination cannot conceive how strongly these operate upon the human mind during a certain progress of society. A line of Virgil, turned up casually, was received in the seventeenth century, and in the court of England, as an intimation of future events; and no wonder that a maiden of the distant and wild isles of Zet-

land should have considered, as an injunction from Heaven, verses which happened to convey a sense analogous to her present situation.

"I will be silent," she muttered,—"I will seal my lips—

> The body to its place, and the soul to Heaven's grace,
> And the rest in God's own time."

"Who speaks there?" said Claud Halcro, in some alarm; for he had not, in his travels in foreign parts, been able by any means to rid himself of his native superstitions. In the condition to which fear and horror had reduced her, Minna was at first unable to reply; and Halcro, fixing his eyes upon the female white figure, which he saw indistinctly, for she stood in the shadow of the house, and the morning was thick and misty, began to conjure her in an ancient rhime which occurred to him as suited for the occasion, and which had in its gibberish a wild and unearthly sound, which may be lost in the ensuing translation:—

"Saint Magnus, controul thee, that martyr of treason;
Saint Ronan, rebuke thee, with rhyme and with reason;
By the mass of Saint Martin, the might of Saint Mary,
Be thou gone, or thy weird shall be worse if thou tarry!
If of good, go hence and hallow thee,—
If of ill, let the earth swallow thee,—
If thou'rt of air, let the grey mist fold thee,—
If of earth, let the swart mine hold thee,—
If a Pixie, seek thy ring,—
If a Nixie, seek thy spring;—
If on middle earth thou'st been
Slave of sorrow, shame, and sin,
Hast eat the bread of toil and strife,
And dree'd the lot which men call life,
Begone to thy stone! for thy coffin is scant of thee,
The worm, thy play-fellow, wails for the want of thee;—
Hence, houseless ghost! let the earth hide thee,
Till Michael shall blow the blast, see that there thou bide thee!—
Phantom, fly hence! take the Cross for a token,
Hence pass till Hallowmass!—my spell is spoken."

"It is I, Halcro," muttered Minna, in a tone so thin and low, that it might have passed for the faint reply of the conjured phantom.

"You!—you!" said Halcro, his tone of alarm changing to one of extreme surprise; "by this moonlight, which is waning, and so it is!—Who could have thought to find you, my most lovely Night, wandering abroad in your own element!—But you saw them, I reckon, as well as I—bold enough in you to follow them, though."

"Saw whom?—follow whom?" said Minna, hoping to gain some information on the subject of her fears and her anxiety.

"The corpse-lights which danced at the haven," replied Halcro; "they bode no good, I promise you—you wot well what the old rhyme says—

> Where corpse-light
> Dances bright,
> Be it by day or night,
> Be it by light or dark,
> There shall corpse lie stiff and stark.

I went half as far as the haven to look after them, but they had vanished. I think I saw a boat put off, however,—some one bound for the haaf, I suppose.—I would we had good news of this fishing—there was Norna left us in anger, and

then these corpse-lights!—Well, God help the while. I am an old man, and can but wish that all were well over.—But how now, my pretty Minna? tears in your eyes!—And now that I see you in the fair moonlight, barefooted too, by Saint Magnus!—Were there no stockings of Zetland wool soft enough for these pretty feet and ancles, that glance so white in the moon-beam?—What, silent!—angry, perhaps," he added, in a more serious tone, "at my nonsense. For shame, silly maiden!—Remember I am old enough to be your father, and have always loved you as my child."

"I am not angry," said Minna, constraining herself to speak—"but heard you nothing?—saw you nothing?—They must have passed you."

"They!" said Claud Halcro; "what mean you by they?—is it the corpse-lights?—No, they did not pass by me, but I think they have passed by you, and blighted you with their influence, for you are as pale as a spectre.—Come, come, Minna," he added, opening a side-door of the dwelling, "these moonlight walks are fitter for old poets than for young maidens—And so lightly clad as you are? Maiden, you should take care

how you give yourself to the breezes of a Zetland night, for they bring more sleet than odours upon their wings.—But, maiden, go in; for, as glorious John says—or, as he does not say—for I cannot remember how his verse chimes—but, as I say myself, in a pretty poem, written when my muse was in her teens,

> Menseful maiden ne'er should rise,
> Till the first beam tinge the skies;
> Silk-fringed eyelids still should close,
> Till the sun has kiss'd the rose;
> Maiden's foot we should not view,
> Mark'd with tiny print on dew,
> Till the opening flowerets spread
> Carpet meet for beauty's tread—

Stay, what comes next?—let me see."

When the spirit of recitation seized on Claud Halcro, he forgot time and place, and might have kept his companion in the cold air for half an hour, giving poetical reasons why she ought to have been in bed. But she interrupted him by the question, earnestly pronounced, yet in a voice which was scarcely articulate, holding Halcro, at

the same time with a trembling and convulsive grasp, as if to support herself from falling,—"Saw you no one in the boat which put to sea but now?"

"Nonsense," replied Halcro; "how could I see any one, when light and distance only enabled me to know that it was a boat, and not a grampus?"

"But there must have been some one in the boat?" repeated Minna, scarce conscious of what she said.

"Certainly," answered the poet; "boats seldom work to windward of their own accord. But come, this is all folly; and so, as the Queen says, in an old play, which was revived for the stage by rare Will D'Avenant, 'To bed—to bed—to bed.'"

They separated, and Minna's limbs conveyed her with difficulty, through several devious passages, to her own chamber, where she stretched herself cautiously beside her still sleeping sister, with a mind harassed with the most agonizing apprehensions. That she had heard Cleveland, she was positive—the tenor of the songs left her no doubt on that subject. If not equally certain

that she had heard young Mertoun's voice in hot quarrel with her lover, the impression to that effect was strong on her mind. The groan, with which the struggle seemed to terminate—the fearful indication from which it seemed that the conqueror had borne off the lifeless body of his victim—all tended to prove that some fatal event had concluded the contest. And which of the unhappy men had fallen?—which had met a bloody death?—which had achieved a fatal and a bloody victory?—These were questions to which the small still voice of interior conviction answered, that her lover Cleveland, from character, temper, and habit, was most likely to have been the survivor of the fray. She received from the reflection an involuntary consolation, which she almost detested herself for admitting, when she recollected that it was at once darkened with her lover's guilt, and embittered with the destruction of Brenda's happiness for ever.

"Innocent, unhappy sister!" such were her reflections; "thou that art ten times better than me, because so unpretending—so unassuming in thine excellence. How is it possible that I should

cease to feel a pang, which is only transferred from my bosom to thine?"

As these cruel thoughts crossed her mind, she could not refrain from straining her sister so close to her bosom, that, after a heavy sigh, Brenda awoke.

"Sister," she said, "is it you?—I dreamed I lay on one of those monuments which Claud Halcro described to us, where the effigy of the inhabitant beneath lies carved in stone upon the sepulchre. I dreamed such a marble form lay by my side, and that it suddenly acquired enough of life and animation to fold me to its cold, moist bosom—and it is your's, Minna, that is indeed so chilly.—You are ill, my dearest Minna! for God's sake, let me rise and call Euphane Fea.—What ails you? has Norna been here again?"

"Call no one hither," said Minna, detaining her; "nothing ails me for which any one has a remedy—nothing but apprehensions of evil worse than even Norna could prophesy. But God is above all, my dear Brenda; and let us pray to him to turn, as he only can, our evil into good."

They did jointly repeat their usual prayer for strength and protection from on high, and again composed themselves to sleep, suffering no word save "God bless you," to pass betwixt them, when their devotions were finished; thus scrupulously dedicating to Heaven their last waking words, if human frailty prevented them from commanding their last waking thoughts. Brenda slept first, and Minna, strongly resisting the dark and evil presentiments which again began to crowd themselves upon her imagination, was at last so fortunate as to slumber also.

The storm which Halcro had expected began about day-break,—a squall, heavy with wind and rain, such as are often felt, even during the finest part of the season, in these latitudes. At the whistle of the wind, and the clatter of the rain on the shingle-roofing of the fisher-huts, many a poor woman was awakened, and called on her children to hold up their little hands and join in prayer for the safety of the dear husband and father, who was even then at the mercy of the disturbed elements. Around the house of Burgh-Westra, chimneys howled, and windows clashed.

The props and rafters of the higher parts of the building, most of them formed out of wreck-wood, groaned and quivered, as if they feared to be again dispersed by the tempest. But the daughters of Magnus Troil continued to sleep as softly and as sweetly as if the hand of Chantry had formed them out of statuary-marble. The squall had passed away, and the sun-beams, dispersing the clouds which drifted to leeward, shone full through the lattice, when Minna first started from the profound sleep into which fatigue and mental exhaustion had lulled her, and raising herself on her arm, began to recal events which, after this interval of profound repose, seemed almost to resemble the baseless visions of the night. She almost doubted if what she recalled of horror, previous to her starting from her bed, was not, indeed, the fiction of a dream, suggested, perhaps, by some external sounds.

"I will see Claud Halcro instantly," she said; "he may know something of these strange noises, as he was stirring at the time."

With that she sprung from bed, but hardly stood upright on the floor, ere her sister

exclaimed, "Gracious Heaven! Minna, what ails your foot—your ancle?"

She looked down, and saw with surprise, which amounted to agony, that both her feet, but particularly one of them, was stained with dark crimson, resembling the colour of dried blood.

Without attempting to answer Brenda, she rushed to the window, and cast a desperate look on the grass beneath, for there she knew she must have contracted the fatal stain. But the rain, which had fallen there in treble quantity, as well from the heavens as from the eaves of the house, had washed away that guilty witness, if indeed such had ever existed there. All was fresh and fair, and the blades of grass, overcharged and bent with rain-drops, glittered like diamonds in the bright morning sun.

While Minna stared upon the spangled verdure, with her full dark eyes fixed and enlarged to circles by the intensity of her terror, Brenda was hanging about her, and, with many an eager inquiry, pressed to know whether or how she had hurt herself?

"A piece of glass cut through my shoe," said Minna, bethinking herself that some excuse was necessary to her sister; "I scarce felt it at the time."

"And yet see how it has bled," said her sister. "Sweet Minna," she added, approaching her with a wetted towel, "let me wipe the blood off—the hurt may be worse than you think of."

But as she approached, Minna, who saw no other way of preventing discovery that the blood with which she was stained had never flowed in her own veins, harshly and hastily repelled the proffered kindness. Poor Brenda, unconscious of any offence which she had given to her sister, drew back two or three paces on finding her service thus harshly refused, and stood gazing at Minna with looks in which there was more of surprise and mortified affection than of resentment, but which had yet something also of natural displeasure.

"Sister," said she, "I thought we had agreed but last night that, happen to us what might, we would at least love each other."

"Much may happen betwixt night and morning," answered Minna, in words rather wrenched from her by her situation, than flowing forth the voluntary interpreters of her thoughts.

"Much may indeed have happened in a night so stormy," answered Brenda; "for see where the very wall around Euphane's plant-a-cruive has been blown down; but neither wind nor rain, nor aught else, can cool our affection, Minna."

"But that may chance," replied Minna, "which may convert it into——"

The rest of the sentence she muttered in a tone so indistinct, that it could not be apprehended; while, at the same time, she washed the blood-stains from her feet and left ancle. Brenda, who still remained looking on at some distance, endeavoured in vain to assume some tone which might re-establish kindness and confidence betwixt them.

"You were right," she said, "Minna, to suffer no one to help you to dress so simple a scratch—standing where I do it is scarce visible."

"The most cruel wounds," replied Minna, "are those which make no outward show—Are you sure you see it at all?"

"O, yes!" replied Brenda, framing her answer as she thought would best please her sister; "I see a very slight scratch; nay, now you draw on the stocking, I can see nothing."

"You do indeed see nothing," answered Minna, somewhat wildly; "but the time will soon come that all—ay, all—will be seen and known."

So saying, she hastily completed her dress, and led the way to the breakfast, where she assumed her place amongst the guests; but with a countenance so pale and hagard, and manners and speech so altered, and so bewildered, that it excited the attention of the whole company, and the utmost anxiety on the part of her father Magnus Troil. Many and various were the conjectures of the guests, concerning a distemperature which seemed rather mental than corporeal. Some hinted the maiden had been struck with an evil eye, and something they muttered about Norna of the Fitful-head; some talked of the departure of Captain Cleveland, and murmured "it was a shame for a young lady to take on so after a land-louper, of whom no one knew any thing;" and this contemptuous epithet was in particular

bestowed on the Captain by Mistress Baby Yellowley, while she was in the act of wrapping round her old skinny neck the very handsome owerlay (as she called it,) wherewith the said Captain had presented her. The old Lady Glowrowrum had a system of her own, which she hinted to Mistress Yellowley, after thanking God that her own connection with the Burgh-Westra family was by the lass's mother, who was a canny Scotswoman, like herself.

"For, as to these Troils, you see, Dame Yellowley, for as high as they hold their heads, they say that ken, (winking sagaciously,) that there is a bee in their bonnet;—that Norna, as they call her, for its no her right name neither, is at whiles far beside her right mind,—and they that ken the cause, say the Fowde was some gate or other linked in with it, for he will never hear an ill word of her. But I was in Scotland then, or I might have kend the real cause, as well as other folk. At ony rate there is a kind of wildness in the blood. Ye ken very weel daft folk dinna bide to be contradicted; and I'll say that for the Fowde—he likes to be contradicted as ill as ony

man in Zetland. But it shall never be said that I said ony ill of the house that I am sae nearly connected wi'. Only ye will mind, dame, it is through the Sinclairs that we are a-kin, not through the Troils,—and the Sinclairs are kend far and wide for a wise generation, dame. But I see there is the stirrup-cup coming round."

"I wonder," said Mistress Baby to her brother, as soon as the Lady Glowrowrum turned from her, "what gars that muckle wife dame, dame, dame that gate at me. She might ken the blude of the Clinkscales is as gude as ony Glowrowrum amang them."

The guests, meanwhile, were fast taking their departure, scarcely noticed by Magnus, who was so much engrossed with Minna's indisposition, that, contrary to his hospitable wont, he suffered them to go away unsaluted. And thus concluded, amidst anxiety and illness, the festival of Saint John, as celebrated on that season at the house of Burgh-Westra; adding another caution to that of the Emperor of Ethiopia,—with how little security man can reckon upon the days which he destines to happiness.

CHAPTER XI.

But this sad evil which doth her infest,
Doth course of natural cause far exceed,
And housed is within her hollow brest,
That either seems some cursed witch's deed,
Or evill spright that in her doth such torment breed.
Fairy Queen, Book III. Canto III.

THE term had now elapsed, by several days, when Mordaunt Mertoun, as he had promised at his departure, should have returned to his father's abode at Jarlshoff, but there were no tidings of his return. Such delay might, at another time, have excited little curiosity and no anxiety; for old Swertha, who took upon her the office of thinking and conjecturing for the little household, would have concluded that he had remained behind the other guests upon some party of sport or pleasure. But she knew that Mordaunt had not been lately in favour with Magnus Troil; she knew that he proposed his

stay at Burgh-Westra should be a short one, upon account of his father's health, to whom, notwithstanding the little encouragement which his filial piety received, he paid uniform attention. Swertha knew all this, and she became anxious. She watched the looks of her master, the elder Mordaunt; but, wrapt in dark and stern uniformity of composure, his countenance, like the surface of a midnight lake, suffered no one to penetrate into what was beneath. His studies, his solitary meals, his lonely walks, succeeded each other in unvaried rotation, and seemed undisturbed by the least thought about Mordaunt's absence.

At length such reports reached Swertha's ear, from various qnarters, that she became totally unable to conceal her anxiety, and resolved, at the risk of provoking her master into fury, or perhaps that of losing her place in his household, to force upon his notice the doubts which afflicted her own mind. Mordaunt's good humour and goodly person must indeed have made no small impression on the withered and selfish heart of the poor old woman, to induce her to take a

course so desperate, and from which her friend the Ranzelman endeavoured in vain to deter her. Still, however, conscious that a miscarriage in the matter would, like the loss of Trinculo's bottle in the horse-pool, be attended not only with dishonour, but with infinite loss, she determined to proceed on her high emprize with as much caution as was consistent with the attempt.

We have already mentioned, that it seemed a part of the very nature of this reserved and unsocial being, at least since his retreat into the utter solitude of Jarlshoff, to endure no one to start a subject of conversation, or to put any question to him, that did not arise out of urgent and pressing emergency. Swertha was sensible, therefore, that, in order favourably to open the discourse which she proposed to hold with her master, she must contrive that it should originate with himself.

To accomplish this purpose, while busied in preparing the table for Mr Mertoun's simple and solitary dinner-meal, she formally adorned the table with two covers instead of one, and made

all her other little preparations as if he was to have a guest or companion at dinner.

The stratagem succeeded; for Mertoun, on coming from his study, no sooner saw the table thus arranged, than he asked Swertha, who, waiting the effect of her stratagem as a fisher watches his ground-baits, was fiddling up and down the room, "Whether Mordaunt was not returned from Burgh-Westra?"

This question was the cue for Swertha, and she answered, in a voice of sorrowful anxiety, half-real half-affected, "Na, na!—nae sic divot had dunted at their door. It wad be blithe news, indeed, to ken that young Master Mordaunt, poor dear bairn, were safe at hame."

"And, if he be not at home, why should you lay a cover for him, you doting fool?" replied Mertoun, in a tone well calculated to stop the old woman's proceedings. But she replied, boldly, "that, indeed, somebody should take thought about Master Mertoun; a' that she could do was to have seat and plate ready for him when he came. But she thought the dear bairn had been ower

lang awa'; and, if she maun speak out, she had her ain fears when and whether he might ever come hame."

"Your fears!" said Mertoun, his eyes flashing as they usually did when his hour of ungovernable passion approached; "do you speak of your idle fears to me, who know that all of your sex, that is not fickleness, and folly, and self-conceit, and self-will, is a bundle of ideotical fears, vapours, and tremors? What are your fears to me, you foolish old hag?"

It is an admirable quality in womankind, that when a breach of the laws of natural affection comes under their observation, the whole sex is in arms. Let a rumour arise in the street of a parent that has misused a child, or a child that has insulted a parent,—I say nothing of the case of husband and wife, where the interest may be accounted for in sympathy,—and all the women within hearing will take animated and decided part with the sufferer. Swertha, notwithstanding her greed and avarice, had her share of the generous feeling, which does so much honour to her sex, and was, on this occasion. so much carried

on by its impulse, that she confronted her master, and upbraided him with his hard-hearted indifference, with a boldness at which she herself was astonished.

"To be sure it wasna her that suld be fearing for her young master, Master Mordaunt, even although he was, as she might well say, the very sea-calf of her heart; but ony other father, but his honor himsel, wad have had speirings made after the poor lad, and him gane this eight days from Burgh-Westra, and naebody kend when or where he had gane. There was nae a bairn in the howff but was maining for him; for he made all their bits of boats with his knife; there wadna be a dry eye in the parish, if aught worse than weal should befall him,—na, no ane, unless it might be his honour's ain."

Mertoun had been much struck, and even silenced, by the insolent volubility of his insurgent housekeeper; but, at the last sarcasm, he imposed on her silence in her turn with an audible voice, accompanied with one of the most terrific glances which his dark eye and stern features could express. But Swertha, who, as she afterwards ac-

quainted the Ranzelman, was wonderfully supported during the whole scene, would not be controuled by the loud voice and ferocious look of her master, but proceeded in the same tone as before.

"His honour," she said, "had made an unco wark because a wheen bits of kists and duds, that naebody had use for, had been gathered on the beach by the poor bodies of the township; and here was the bravest lad in the country lost, and cast away, as it were, before his een, and nae ane asking what was come o' him."

"What should come of him but good, you old fool," answered Mr Mertoun, "as far, at least, as there can be good in any of the follies he spends his time in?"

This was spoken rather in a scornful than an angry tone, and Swertha, who had got into the spirit of the dialogue, was resolved not to let it drop, now that the fire of her opponent seemed to slacken.

"O ay, to be sure I am an auld fool,—but if Master Mordaunt should have settled down in the Roost, as mair than ae boat had been lost in that wearyfu' squall the other morning—by good

luck it was short as it was sharp, or naething could have lived in it—or if he were drowned in a loch coming hame on foot, or if he were killed by miss of footing on a craig—the haill island kend how venturesome he was—who," said Swertha, "will be the auld fool then?" And she added a pathetic ejaculation, that "God would protect the poor motherless bairn! for if he had had a mother, there would have been search made after him before now."

This last sarcasm affected Mertoun powerfully,—his jaw quivered, his face grew pale, and he muttered to Swertha to go into his study, (where she was scarcely ever permitted to enter), and fetch him a bottle which stood there.

"O ho!" quoth Swertha to herself, as she hastened on the commission, "my master knows where to find a cup of comfort to qualify his water with upon fitting occasions."

There was indeed a case of such bottles as were usually employed to hold strong waters, but the dust and cobwebs in which they were enveloped shewed that they had not been touched for many years. With some difficulty Swertha

extracted the cork of one of them, by the help of a fork—for cork-screw was there none at Jarlshoff—and having ascertained by smell, and, in case of any mistake, by a moderate mouthful, that it contained wholesome Barbadoes-waters, she carried it into the room, where her master still continued to struggle with his faintness. She then began to pour a small quantity into the nearest cup that she could find, wisely judging that, upon a person so much unaccustomed to the use of spirituous liquors, a little might produce a strong effect. But the patient signed to her impatiently to fill the cup, which might hold more than the third of an English pint measure, up to the very brim, and swallowed it down without hesitation.

"Now the saunts above have a care on us!" said Swertha; "he will be drunk as weel as mad, and wha is to guide him then, I wonder?"

But Mertoun's breath and colour returned, without the slightest symptom of intoxication; on the contrary, Swertha afterwards reported, that, although she had always a firm opinion in favour of a dram, yet she never saw one work such miracles—he spoke mair like a man of the

middle world than she had ever heard him since she had entered his service.

"Swertha," he said, "you are right in this matter, and I was wrong.—Go down to the Ranzelman directly, tell him to come and speak with me, without an instant's delay, and bring me special word what boats and people he can command; I will employ them all in the search, and they shall be plentifully rewarded."

Stimulated by the spur which maketh the old woman proverbially to trot, Swertha posted down to the hamlet, with all the speed of threescore, rejoicing that her sympathetic feelings were likely to achieve their own reward, having given rise to a quest which promised to be so lucrative, and in the profits whereof she was determined to have her share, shouting out as she went, and long before she got within hearing, the names of Niel Ronaldson, Sweyn Erickson, and the other friends and confederates who were interested in her mission. To say the truth, notwithstanding that the good dame really felt a deep interest in Mordaunt Mertoun, and was mentally troubled on account of his absence, perhaps few things

would have disappointed her more than if he had at this moment started up in her path safe and sound, and rendered unnecessary, by his appearance, the expence and the bustle of searching after him.

Soon did Swertha accomplish her business in the village, and adjust with the senators of the township her own little share of per centage upon the profits likely to accrue on her mission; and speedily did she return to Jarlshoff, with Niel Ronaldson by her side, schooling him to the best of her skill in all the peculiarities of her master.

"Abune a' things," she said, "never make him wait for an answer; and speak loud and distinct, as if you were hailing aboat,—for he douna bide to say the same thing twice over; and if he asks about distance, ye may make leagues for miles, for he kens naething about the face of the earth that he lives upon; and if he speak of siller, ye may ask dollars for shillings, for he minds them nae mair than sclate-stanes."

Thus tutored, Niel Ronaldson was introduced into the presence of Mertoun, but was utterly

confounded to find that he could not act upon the system of deception which had been projected.—When he attempted, by some exaggeration of distance and peril, to enhance the hire of the boats and of the men, (for the search was to be by sea and land), he found himself at once cut short by Mertoun, who shewed not only the most perfect knowledge of the country, but of distances, tides, currents, and all belonging to the navigation of those seas, although these were topics with which he had hitherto appeared to be totally unacquainted. The Ranzelman, therefore, trembled when they came to speak of the recompence to be afforded for their exertions in the search; for it was not more unlikely that Mertoun should be as well informed of what was just and proper upon this head than upon others; and Niel remembered the storm of his fury when, at an early period after he had settled at Jarlshoff, he drove Swertha and Sweyn Erickson from his presence. As, however, he stood hesitating betwixt the opposite fears of asking too much or too little, Mertoun stopped his mouth, and ended his hesitation, by promising him a recompence

beyond what he dared have ventured to ask, with an additional gratuity, in case they returned with the pleasing intelligence that his son was safe.

When this great point was settled, Niel Ronaldson, like a man of conscience, began to consider earnestly the various places at which inquiry should be made after the young man; and having undertaken faithfully that the inquiry should be prosecuted at all the houses of the gentry, both in this and the neighbouring islands, he added, that, "after all, if his honour would not be angry, there was ane not far off, that if any body dared speir her a question, and if she liked to answer it, could tell more about Master Mordaunt than any body else could.—Ye will ken wha I mean, Swertha? Her that was down at the haven this morning." Thus he concluded, addressing himself with a mysterious look to the house-keeper, which she answered with a nod and a wink.

"How mean you?" said Mertoun; "speak out, short and open—whom do you speak of?"

"It is Norna of the Fitful-head," said Swer-

tha, "that the Ranzelman is thinking about: for she has gone up to Saint Ringan's Kirk this morning on business of her own."

"And what can this person know of my son?" said Mertoun; "she is, I believe, a wandering madwoman, or impostor."

"If she wanders," said Swertha, "it is for nae lack of means at hame, and that is weel known—plenty of a' thing has she of her ain, forbye that the Fowde himsel would let her want naething."

"But what is that to my son?" said Mertoun, impatiently.

"I dinna ken—she took unco pleasure in Master Mordaunt from the time she first saw him, and mony a braw thing she gave him at ae time or another, forbye the gowd chain that hangs about his bonny craig—folks say it is of fairy gold—I ken na what gold it is, but Bryce Snaelsfoot says that the value will mount to an hundred punds English, and that is nae deaf nuts."

"Go, Ronaldson," said Mertoun, "or else send some one, to seek this woman out—if you think there be a chance of her knowing any thing of my son."

"She kens a' thing that happens in thae islands," said Niel Ronaldson, "muckle sooner than other folk, and that is Heaven's truth.—But as to going to the kirk, or the kirk-yard, to spier after her, there is not a man in Zetland will do it, for meed or for money—and that's Heaven's truth as weel as the other."

"Cowardly superstitious fools!" said Mertoun.—"But give me my cloak, Swertha.—This woman has been at Burgh-Westra—she is related to Troil's family—she may know something of Mordaunt's absence, and its cause—I will seek her myself—She is at the Cross-kirk, you say?"

"No, not at the Cross-kirk, but at the auld Kirk of Saint Ringan's—its a dowie bit, and far frae being canny; and if your honour," added Swertha, "wad walk by my rule, I wad wait until she came back, and no trouble her when she may be mair busied wi' the dead, for ony thing that we ken, than she is wi' the living. The like of her carena to have other folk's een on them when they are, gude sain us! doing their ain particular turns."

Mertoun made no answer, but throwing his cloak loosely around him, (for the day was misty with passing showers,) and leaving the ruinous mansion of Jarlshoff, he walked at a pace much faster than was usual with him, taking the direction of the ruinous church, which stood, as he well knew, within three or four miles of his dwelling.

The Ranzelman and Swertha stood gazing after him in silence, until he was fairly out of ear-shot, when, looking seriously on each other, and shaking their sagacious heads in the same boding degree of vibration, they uttered their remarks in the same breath.

"Fools are aye fleet and fain," said Swertha. "Fey* folks run fast," added the Ranzelman; "and the thing that we are born to, we cannot win bye.—I have known them that tried to stop folks that were fey.—You have heard of Helen

* *Fey* is an epithet applied to those who are *fated*, which seems to be the derivation of it, or predestined to death, and who are supposed by the Scottish common people to rush upon their doom, as if carried forward by some irresistible impulse.

Emberson of Camsey, how she stopped all the boles and windows about the house, that her gude-man might not see day-light, and rise to the haaf-fishing, because she feared foul weather; and how the boat he should have sailed in was lost in the Roost; and how she came back, rejoicing in her good-man's safety—but ne'er may care, for there she found him drowned in the masking-fat, within the wa's of his ain biggin; and moreover—"

But here Swertha reminded the Ranzelman that he must go down to the haven to get off the fishing-boats; "for both that my heart is sair for the bonny lad, and that I am fear'd he cast up of his ain accord before you are at sea; and, as I have often told ye, my master may lead, but he winna drive; and if ye do not his bidding, and get out to sea, the never a bodle of boat-hire will ye see."

"Weel, weel, good dame," said the Ranzelman, "we will launch as fast as we can; and by good luck, neither Clawson's boat, nor Peter Grot's, are out to the haaf this morning, for a rabbit ran across them as they were going on

board, and they came back like wise men, kenning they wad be called to other wark this day. And a marvel it is to think, Swertha, how few real judicious men are left in this land.—There is our great Udaller is weel eneugh when he is fresh, but he makes ower mony voyages in his ship and his yawl to be lang sae; and now they say his daughter, Mistress Minna, is sair out of sorts.—Then there is Norna kens muckle mair than other folks, but wise woman ye cannot call her.—Our tacksman here, Master Mertoun, his wit is sprung in the bowsprit I doubt—his son is a daft gowk; and I ken few of consequence hereabouts—excepting always myself, and may be you, Swertha—but what may, in some sense or other, be called a fule."

"That may be, Niel Ronaldson," said the dame; "but if you do not hasten the faster to the shore, you will lose tide; and, as I said to my master some short time syne, wha will be the fule then?"

CHAPTER XII.

I do love these ancient ruins—
We never tread upon them but we set
Our foot upon some reverend history,
And questionless, here, in this open court,
(Which now lies naked to the injuries
Of stormy weather) some men lie interr'd,
Loved the Church so well, and gave so largely to it,
They thought it should have canopied their bones
Till dooms-day;—but all things have their end—
Churches and cities, which have diseases like to men,
Must have like death which we have.

Duchess of Malfy.

The ruinous church of Saint Ninian's had, in its time, enjoyed great celebrity; for that mighty system of superstition, which spread its roots over all Europe, had not failed to extend them even to this remote archipelago, and Zetland had, in the Catholic times, her saints, her shrines, and her reliques, which, though little known else-

where, attracted the homage and commanded the observance of the simple inhabitants of Thule. Their devotion to this church of Saint Ninian, or, as he was provincially termed, Saint Ringan, situated, as the edifice was, close to the sea-beach, and serving, in many points, as a land-mark to their boats, was particularly obstinate, and was connected with so much superstitious ceremonial and credulity, that the reformed clergy thought it best, by an order of the Church Courts, to prohibit all spiritual service within its walls, as tending to foster the rooted faith of the simple and rude people around in saint-worship, and other erroneous doctrines of the Romish Church.

After the church of Saint Ninian's had been thus denounced as a seat of idolatry, and desecrated of course, the public worship was transferred to another church; and the roof, with its lead and its rafters, having been stripped from the little rude old Gothic building, it was left in the wilderness to the mercy of the elements. The fury of the uncontrouled winds, which howled along an exposed space of shifting sands, (for the

soil resembled that which we have described at Jarlshoff,) very soon choked up nave and aisle; and on the north-west side, which was chiefly exposed to the wind, hid the outside walls more than half way upwards with mounds of drifted sand, over which the gable-ends of the building, with the little belfrey, which was built above its nave, arose in ragged and shattered nakedness of ruin.

Yet, deserted as it was, the Kirk of Saint Ringan's still retained some semblance of the ancient homage formerly rendered there. The rude and ignorant fishermen of Dunrossness observed a practice, of which they themselves had well nigh forgot the origin, and from which the Protestant Clergy in vain endeavoured to deter them.—When their boats were in extreme peril, it was common amongst them to propose to vow an *awmous*, as they termed it, that is, an alms, to Saint Ringan; and when the danger was over, they never failed to absolve themselves of their vow, by coming singly and secretly to the old church, and putting off their shoes and stockings at the entrance of the church-yard, walking thrice

around the ruins, observing that they did so in the course of the sun. When the circuit was accomplished for the third time, the votary dropped his offering, usually a small silver coin, through the mullions of a lanceolated window, which opened into a side aisle, and then retired, avoiding carefully to look behind him till he was beyond the precincts which had once been hallowed ground; for it was believed that the skeleton of the saint received the offering in his bony hand, and shewed his ghastly death's-head at the window into which it was thrown.

Indeed, the scene was rendered more appalling to weak and ignorant minds, because the same stormy and eddying winds which, on the one side of the church, threatened to bury the ruins with sand, and had, in fact, heaped it up in huge quantities, so as almost to hide the side-wall with its buttresses, seemed bent on uncovering the graves of those who had been laid to their long rest on the south-eastern quarter; and, after an unusually hard gale, the coffins, and sometimes the very corpses, of those who had been interred

without the usual cearments, were discovered, in a ghastly manner, to the eyes of the living.

It was to this desolated place of worship that the elder Mertoun now proceeded, though without any of those religious or superstitious purposes with which the church of Saint Ringan's was usually approached. He was totally without the superstitious fears of the country,—nay, from the sequestered and sullen manner in which he lived, withdrawing himself from human society even when assembled for worship, it was currently believed that he erred on the more fatal side, and believed rather too little than too much of that which the Church receives.

As he entered the little bay, on the shore, and almost on the beach of which the ruins are situated, he could not help pausing for an instant, and becoming sensible that the scene, as calculated to operate on human feelings, had been selected with much judgment as the scite of a religious house.—In front lay the sea, into which two head-lands, which formed the extremities of the bay, projected their gigantic causeways of dark and sable rocks, on the ledges of which the

gulls, scouries, and other sea-fowl, appeared like flakes of snow; while, upon the lower ranges of the cliff, stood whole lines of cormorants, drawn up alongside of each other, like soldiers in their battle array, and other living thing was there none to see. The sea, although not in a tempestuous state, was disturbed enough to rush on these capes with a sound like distant thunder, and the billows, which rose in sheets of foam half way up these sable rocks, formed a contrast of colouring equally striking and awful.

Betwixt the extremities, or capes, of these projecting head-lands, there rolled, on the day when Mertoun visited the scene, a deep and dense aggregation of clouds, through which no human eye could penetrate, and which, bounding the vision, and excluding all view of the distant ocean, rendered it no unapt representation of the sea in the Vision of Mirza, whose extent was concealed by vapours and clouds and storms. The ground rising steeply from the sea-beach, permitted no view into the interior of the country, and seemed a scene of irretrievable barrenness, where scrubby

and stunted heath, intermixed with the long bent, or coarse grass, which first covers sandy soils, were the only vegetables that could be seen. Upon a natural elevation, which rose above the beach in the very bottom of the bay, and receded a little from the sea, so as to be without reach of the waves, arose the half-buried ruin which we have already described, surrounded by a wasted, half-ruinous, and mouldering wall, which, breached in several places, served still to divide the precincts of the cemetery. The mariners who were driven by accident into this solitary bay, pretended that the church was occasionally observed to be full of lights, and, from that circumstance, were used to prophecy shipwrecks and deaths by sea.

As Mertoun approached near to the chapel, he adopted, insensibly, and perhaps without much premeditation, measures to avoid being himself seen, until he came close under the walls of the burial-ground, which he approached, as it chanced, on that side where the sand was blowing from the graves, in the manner we have described.

Here, looking through one of the gaps in the wall, which time had made, he beheld the person whom he sought, occupied in a manner which assorted well with the ideas popularly entertained of her character, but which was otherwise sufficiently extraordinary.

She was employed beside a rude monument, on one side of which was represented the rough outline of a cavalier, or knight, on horseback, while on the other appeared a shield, with the armorial bearings so defaced as not to be intelligible; which scutcheon was suspended by one angle, contrary to the modern custom, which usually places them straight and upright. At the foot of this pillar was believed to repose, as Mertoun had formerly heard, the bones of Ribolt Troil, one of the remote ancestors of Magnus, and a man renowned for deeds of valorous emprize in the fifteenth century. From the grave of this warrior Norna of the Fitful-head seemed busied in shovelling the sand, an easy task where it was so light and loose; so that it seemed plain that she would shortly complete what the rude winds had begun, and make bare the bones which

lay there interred. As she laboured she muttered her magic song; for without the Runic rhyme no form of northern superstition was ever performed. We have perhaps preserved too many examples of these incantations; but we cannot help attempting to translate that which follows:—

"Champion, famed for warlike toil,
Art thou silent, Ribolt Troil?
Sand, and dust, and pebbly stones,
Are leaving bare thy giant bones.
Who dared touch the wild bear's skin
Ye slumber'd on, while life was in?—
A woman now, or babe, may come
And cast the covering from thy tomb.

"Yet be not wrathful, Chief, nor blight
Mine eyes or ears with sound or sight!
I come not, with unhallow'd tread,
To wake the slumbers of the dead,
Or lay thy giant reliques bare;
But what I seek thou well can'st spare.
Be it to my hand allow'd
To shear a merk's weight from thy shroud;
Yet leave thee sheeted lead enough
To shield thy bones from weather rough.

"See, I draw my magic knife—
Never while thou wert in life
Laid'st thou still for sloth or fear,
When point and edge were glittering near;
See, the cearments now I sever—
Waken now, or sleep for ever!
Thou wilt not wake—the deed is done,—
The prize I sought is fairly won.

"Thanks, Ribolt, thanks,—for this the sea
Shall smooth its ruffled crest for thee,—
And while afar its billows foam,
Subside to peace near Ribolt's tomb.
Thanks, Ribolt, thanks—for this the might
Of wild winds raging at their height,
When to thy place of slumber nigh,
Shall soften to a lullaby.

"She, the dame of doubt and dread,
Norna of the Fitful-head,
Mighty in her own despite—
Miserable in her might;
In despair and frenzy great,—
In her greatness desolate;
Wisest, wickedest who lives,
Well can keep the word she gives."

While Norna chaunted the first part of this rhyme, she completed the task of laying bare a part of the leaden coffin of the ancient warrior, and severed from it, with much caution and apparent awe, a portion of the metal. She then reverentially threw back the sand upon the coffin; and by the time she had finished her song, no trace remained that the secrets of the sepulchre had been violated.

Mertoun remained gazing on her from behind the church-yard wall during the whole ceremony, not from any impression of veneration for her or her employment, but because he conceived that to interrupt a madwoman in her act of madness, was not the best way to obtain from her such intelligence as she might have to impart. Meanwhile he had full time to consider her figure, although her face was obscured by her dishevelled hair, and by the hood of her dark mantle, which permitted no more to be visible than a Druidess would probably have exhibited at the celebration of her mystical rites. Mertoun had often heard of Norna before; nay, it is most probable that he might have seen her repeatedly, for she was in

the vicinity of Jarlshoff more than once since his residence there. But the absurd stories which were in circulation respecting her, prevented his paying any attention to a person whom he regarded as either an impostor, or a madwoman, or a compound of both. Yet, now that his attention was, by circumstances, involuntarily fixed upon her person and deportment, he could not help acknowledging to himself that she was either a complete enthusiast, or rehearsed her part so admirably, that no Pythoness of ancient times could have excelled her. The dignity and solemnity of her gestures,—the sonorous, yet impressive tone of the voice with which she obtested the departed spirit whose mortal reliques she ventured to disturb, were such as failed not to make an impression upon him, careless and indifferent as he generally appeared to all that went on around him. But no sooner was her singular occupation terminated, than, entering the churchyard with some difficulty, by clambering over the disjointed ruins of the wall, he made Norna aware of his presence. Far from starting, or expressing the least surprise at his appearance in a place

so solitary, she said, in a tone that seemed to intimate that he had been expected, "So,—you have sought me at last?"

"And found you," replied Mertoun, judging he would best introduce the inquiries he had to make, by assuming a tone which corresponded to her own.

"Yes!" she replied, "found me you have, and in the place where all men must meet—amid the tabernacles of the dead."

"Here we must, indeed, meet at last," replied Mertoun, glancing his eyes on the desolate scene around, where head-stones, half covered in sand, and others, from which the same wind had stripped the soil on which they rested, covered with inscriptions, and sculptured with the emblems of mortality, were the most conspicuous objects;—"here, as in the house of death, all men must meet at length; and happy those that come soonest to the quiet haven."

"He that dares desire this haven," said Norna, "must have steered a steady course in the voyage of life. I dare not hope for such quiet har-

bour. Darest thou expect it? or has the course thou hast kept deserved it?"

"It matters not to my present purpose," replied Mertoun; "I have to ask you what tidings you know of my son Mordaunt Mertoun?"

"A father," replied the Sybil, "asks of a stranger what tidings she has of his son! How should I know aught of him? the cormorant says not to the mallard, where is my brood?"

"Lay aside this useless affectation of mystery," said Mertoun; "with the vulgar it has its effect, but upon me it is thrown away. The people of Jarlshoff have told me that you do know, or may know, something of Mordaunt Mertoun, who has not returned home after the festival of Saint John's, held in the house of your relative, Magnus Troil. Give me such information, if indeed you have it to give; and it shall be recompensed, if the means of recompence are in my power."

"The wide round of earth," replied Norna, "holds nothing that I would call a recompence for the slightest word that I throw away upon a living ear. But for thy son, if thou would'st see

him in life, repair to the approaching Fair of Kirkwall, in Orkney."

"And wherefore thither?" said Mertoun; "I know he had no purpose in that direction."

"We drive on the stream of fate," answered Norna, "without oar or rudder. You had no purpose this morning of visiting the Kirk of Saint Ringan, yet you are here;—you had no purpose but a minute hence of being at Kirkwall, and yet you will go thither."

"Not, unless the cause is more distinctly explained to me. I am no believer, dame, in those who assert your supernatural powers."

"You shall believe in them ere we part," said Norna. "As yet you know but little of me, nor shall you know more. But I know enough of you, and could convince you with one word that I do so."

"Convince me then," said Mertoun; "for unless I am so convinced, there is little chance of my following your counsel."

"Mark, then," said Norna, "what I have to say on your son's score, else what I shall say to you on your own will banish every other thought

from your memory. You shall go to the approaching Fair at Kirkwall; and, on the fifth day of the Fair, you shall walk, at the hour of noon, in the outer aisle of the Cathedral of Saint Magnus, and there you shall meet a person who will give you tidings of your son."

"You must speak more distinctly, dame," returned Mertoun, scornfully, "if you hope that I should follow your counsel. I have been fooled in my time by women, but never so grossly as you seem willing to gull me."

"Hearken, then!" said the old woman. "The word which I speak shall touch the nearest secret of thy life, and thrill thee through nerve and bone."

So saying, she whispered a word into Mertoun's ear, the effect of which seemed almost magical. He remained fixed and motionless with surprise, as, waving her arm slowly aloft, with an air of superiority and triumph, Norna glided from him, turned round a corner of the ruins, and was soon out of sight.

Mertoun offered not to follow, or to trace her. "We fly from our fate in vain!" he said, as he

began to recover himself; and turning, he left behind him the desolate ruins with their cemetery. As he looked back from the very last point at which the church was visible, he saw the figure of Norna, muffled in her mantle, standing on the very summit of the ruined tower, and stretching out in the sea-breeze something which resembled a white pennon, or flag. A feeling of horror, similar to that excited by her last words, again thrilled through his bosom, and he hastened onwards with unwonted speed, until he had left the church of Saint Ninians, with its bay of sand, far behind him.

Upon his arrival at Jarlshoff, the alteration in his countenance was so great, that Swertha conjectured he was about to fall into one of those fits of deep melancholy which she termed his dark hour.

"And what better could be expected," thought Swertha, "when he must needs go visit Norna of the Fitful-head, when she was in the haunted Kirk of Saint Ninian's?"

But without testifying any other symptoms of an alienated mind, than that of deep and sullen

dejection, her master acquainted her with his intention to go to the Fair of Kirkwall,—a thing so contrary to his usual habits, that the housekeeper well nigh refused to credit her ears. Shortly after he heard, with apparent indifference, the accounts returned by the different persons who had been sent out in quest of Mordaunt, by sea and land, who all of them returned without any tidings. The equanimity with which Mertoun heard the report of their bad success, convinced Swertha still more firmly, that in his interview with Norna, that issue had been predicted to him by the Sybil whom he had consulted.

The township were yet more surprised, when their tacksman, Mr Mertoun, as if on some sudden resolution, made preparations to visit Kirkwall during the Fair, although he had hitherto avoided sedulously all such places of public resort. Swertha puzzled herself a good deal without being able to penetrate this mystery; and vexed herself still more concerning the fate of her young master. But her concern was much softened by the deposit of a sum of money, seem-

ing, however moderate in itself, a treasure in her eyes, which her master put into her hands, acquainting her, at the same time, that he had taken his passage for Kirkwall, in a small bark belonging to the proprietor of the island of Mousa.

CHAPTER XIII.

Nae langer she wept,—her tears were a' spent,—
Despair it was come, and she thought it content;
She thought it content, but her cheek it grew pale,
And she droop'd, like a lily broke down by the hail.
Continuation of Auld Robin Gray.

The condition of Minna much resembled that of the village heroine in Lady Ann Lindsay's beautiful ballad. Her natural firmness of mind prevented her from sinking under the pressure of the horrible secret, which haunted her while awake, and was yet more tormenting during her broken and hurried slumbers. There is no grief so dreadful as that which we dare not communicate, and in which we can neither ask nor desire sympathy; and when to this is added the burthen of a guilty mystery to an innocent bosom, there is little wonder that Minna's health should have sunk under the burthen.

To the friends around, her habits and manners, nay, her temper, seemed altered to such an extraordinary degree, that it is no wonder that some should have ascribed the change to witchcraft, and some to incipient madness. She became unable to bear the solitude in which she formerly delighted to spend her time; yet when she hurried into society, it was without either joining in, or attending to what passed. Generally she appeared wrapped in sad, and even sullen abstraction, until her attention was suddenly roused by some casual mention of the name of Cleveland, or of Mordaunt Mertoun, at which she started, with the horror of one who sees the lighted match applied to a charged mine, and expects to be instantly involved in the horrors of the explosion. And when she observed that the discovery was not yet made, it was so far from being a consolation, that she almost wished the worst was known, rather than endure the continued agonies of suspense.

Her conduct towards her sister was so variable, yet uniformly so painful to the kind-hearted Brenda, that it seemed to all around, one of the

strongest features of her malady. Sometimes Minna was impelled to seek her sister's company, as if by the consciousness that they were common sufferers by a misfortune of which she herself alone could grasp the extent; and then suddenly the feeling of the injury which Brenda had received through the supposed agency of Cleveland, made her unable to bear her presence, and still less to endure the consolation which her sister, mistaking the nature of her malady, vainly endeavoured to administer. Frequently, also, did it happen, that, while Brenda was imploring her sister to take comfort, she incautiously touched upon some subject which thrilled to the very centre of her soul; so that, unable to conceal her agony, Minna rushed hastily from the apartment. All these different moods, though they too much resembled, to one who knew not their real source, the caprices of unkind estrangement, Brenda endured with such prevailing and unruffled gentleness of disposition, that Minna was frequently moved to shed floods of tears upon her neck; and, perhaps, the moments in which she did so, though embittered by the recollection

that her fatal secret concerned the destruction of Brenda's happiness as well as her own, were still, softened as they were by sisterly affection, the most endurable moments of this most miserable period of her life.

The effects of the alternations of moping melancholy, fearful agitation, and bursts of nervous feeling, were soon visible on the poor young woman's face and person. She became pale and emaciated; her eye lost the steady quiet look of happiness and innocence, and was alternately dim and wild, as she was acted upon by a general feeling of her own distressful condition, or by some quicker and more poignant sense of agony. Her very features seemed to change, and become sharp and eager, and her voice, which, in its ordinary tones, was low and placid, now sometimes sunk in indistinct mutterings, and sometimes was raised beyond the natural key, in hasty and abrupt exclamations. When in company with others, she was sullenly silent, and when she ventured into solitude, was observed (for it was now thought very proper to watch her on such occasions,) to speak much to herself.

The pharmacy of the islands was in vain resorted to by Minna's anxious father. Sages of both sexes, who knew the virtues of every herb which drinks the dew, and augmented these virtues by words of might, used while they prepared and applied the medicines, were attended with no benefit; and Magnus, in the utmost anxiety, was at last induced to have recourse to the advice of his kinswoman, Norna of the Fitful-head, although, owing to circumstances, noticed in the course of the story, there was at this time some estrangement between them. His first application was in vain.—Norna was then at her usual place of residence, upon the sea-coast, near the head-land from which she usually took her designation; but, although Erick Scambester himself brought the message, she refused positively to see him, or to return any answer.

Magnus was angry at the slight put upon his messenger and message, but his anxiety on Minna's account, as well as the respect which he had for Norna's real misfortunes and imputed wisdom and power, prevented him from indulging, on the present occasion, his usual irritability of

disposition. On the contrary, he determined to make an application to his kinswoman in his own person. He kept his purpose, however, to himself, and only desired his daughters to be in readiness to attend him upon a visit to a relation whom he had not seen for some time, and directed them, at the same time, to carry some provisions along with them, as the journey was distant, and they might perhaps find their friend unprovided.

Unaccustomed to ask explanations of his pleasure, and hoping that exercise and the amusement of such an excursion might be of service to her sister, Brenda, upon whom all household and family charges now devolved, caused the necessary preparations to be made for the expedition; and, on the next morning, they were engaged in tracing the long and tedious course of beach and of moorland, which, only varied by occasional patches of oats and barley, where a little ground had been selected for cultivation, divided Burgh-Westra from the north-western extremity of the Mainland, (as the principal island is called,)

which terminates in the cape called Fitful-head, as the south-western point ends in the cape of Sumburgh.

On they went, through wild and over wold, the Udaller bestriding a strong, square-made, well-barrelled palfrey, of Norwegian breed, somewhat taller, and yet as stout, as the ordinary ponies of the country; while Minna and Brenda, famed, amongst other accomplishments, for their horsemanship, rode two of those hardy animals, which, bred and reared with more pains than is usually bestowed, shewed, both by the neatness of their form and their activity, that the race, so much and so carelessly neglected, is capable of being improved into beauty without losing any thing of its spirit or vigour. They were attended by two servants on horseback, and two on foot, secure that the last circumstance would be no delay to their journey, because a great part of the way was so rugged, or so marshy, that the horses could only move at a foot pace; and that, whenever they met with any considerable track of hard and even ground, they had

only to borrow from the nearest herd of ponies the use of a couple for the accommodation of these pedestrians.

The journey was a melancholy one, and little conversation passed, except when the Udaller, pressed by impatience and vexation, urged his poney to a quick pace, and again, recollecting Minna's weak state of health, slackened to a walk, and reiterated inquiries how she felt herself, and whether the fatigue was not too much for her. At noon the party halted and partook of some refreshment, for which they had made ample provision, beside a pleasant spring, the pureness of whose waters, however, did not suit the Udaller's palate, until qualified by a liberal addition of right Nantz. After he had a second, yea and a third time, filled a large silver travelling cup, embossed with a German Cupid smoking a pipe, and a German Bacchus emptying his flask down the throat of a bear, he began to become more talkative than vexation had permitted him to be during the early part of their journey, and thus addressed his daughters.

"Well, children, we are within a league or two of Norna's dwelling, and we will soon see how the old spell-mutterer will receive us."

Minna interrupted her father with a faint exclamation, while Brenda, surprised to a great degree, exclaimed, "Is it then to Norna that we are to make this visit?—Heaven forbid!"

"And wherefore should Heaven forbid?" said the Udaller, knitting his brows; "wherefore, I would gladly know, should Heaven forbid me to visit my kinswoman, whose skill may be of use to your sister, if any woman in Zetland, or man either, can be of service to her?—You are a fool, Brenda,—your sister has more sense.—Cheer up, Minna!—thou wert ever wont to like her songs and stories, and used to hang about her neck, when little Brenda cried and ran from her like a Spanish merchant-man from a Dutch caper." *

"I wish she may not frighten me as much to-day, father," replied Brenda, desirous of indulging Minna in her taciturnity, and at the same

* A light-armed vessel of the seventeenth century, adapted for privateering, and much used by the Dutch.

time to amuse her father by sustaining the conversation; "I have heard so much of her dwelling, that I am rather alarmed at the thought of going there uninvited."

"Thou art a fool," said Magnus, "to think that a visit from her kinsfolks can ever come amiss to a kind, hearty, Hialtland heart, like my cousin Norna's.—And, now I think on't, I will be sworn that is the reason why she would not receive Erick Scambester!—It is many a long day since I have seen her chimney smoke, and I have never carried you thither—She hath indeed some right to call me unkind. But I will tell her the truth—and that is, that, though such be the fashion, I do not think it is fair or honest to eat up the substance of lone women-folks, as we do that of our brother Udallers, when we roll about from house to house in the winter season, until we gather like a snow-ball, and eat up all wherever we come."

"There is no fear of our putting Norna to any distress just now," replied Brenda, "for I have ample provision of every thing that we can possibly need—fish, and bacon, and salted mut-

ton, and dried geese—more than we could eat in a week, beides enough of liquor for you, father."

"Right, right, my girl!" said the Udaller; "a well-found ship makes a merry voyage—so we will only want the kindness of Norna's roof, and a little bedding for you; for, as to myself, my sea-cloak, and honest dry boards of Norway deal, suit me better than your eider-down cushions and mattresses. So that Norna will have the pleasure of seeing us without having a stiver's worth of trouble."

"I wish she may think it a pleasure, sir," replied Brenda.

"Why, what does the girl mean, in the name of the Martyr?" replied Magnus Troil; "doest thou think my kinswoman is a heathen, who will not rejoice to see her own flesh and blood?—I would I were as sure of a good year's fishing!—No, no! I only fear we may find her from home at present, for she is often a wanderer, and all with thinking over much on what can never be helped."

Minna sighed deeply as her father spoke, and the Udaller went on—

"Doest thou sigh at that, my girl?—why, 'tis the fault of half the world—let it never be thine own, Minna."

Another suppressed sigh intimated that the caution came too late.

"I believe you are afraid of my cousin as well as Brenda is," said the Udaller, gazing on her pale countenance; "if so, speak the word, and we will return back again as if we had the wind on our quarter, and were running fifteen knots by the line."

"Do, for Heaven's sake, sister, let us return!" said Brenda, imploringly; "you know—you remember—you must be well aware that Norna can do nought to help you."

"It is but too true;" said Minna, in a subdued voice; "but I know not—she may answer a question—a question that only the miserable dare ask at the miserable."

"Nay, my kinswoman is no miser," answered the Udaller, who only heard the beginning of the word; "a good income she has, both in Orkney and here, and many a fair lispund of butter is paid to her. But the poor have the best share

of it, and shame fall the Zetlander who begrudges them; the rest she spends, I wot not how, in her journies through the islands. But you will laugh to see her house, and Nick Strumpfer, whom she calls Pacolet—many folks think Nick is the devil; but he is flesh and blood, like any of us—his father lived in Græmsay.—I shall be glad to see Nick again."

While the Udaller thus ran on, Brenda, who, in recompence for a less portion of imagination than her sister, was gifted with sound common sense, was debating with herself the probable effect of this visit on her sister's health. She came finally to the resolution of speaking with her father aside, upon the first occasion which their journey should afford. To him she determined to communicate the whole particulars of their nocturnal interview with Norna, to which, among other agitating causes, she attributed the depression of Minna's spirits, and then make himself the judge whether he ought to persist in his visit to a person so singular, and expose his daughter to all the shock which her nerves might possibly receive from the interview.

Just as she had arrived at this conclusion, her father, dashing the crumbs from his laced waistcoat with one hand, and receiving with the other a fourth cup of brandy and water, drank devoutly to the success of their voyage, and ordered all to be in readiness to set forward. Whilst they were saddling the ponies, Brenda, with some difficulty, contrived to make her father understand she wished to speak with him in private—no small surprise to the honest Udaller, who, though secret as the grave in the very few things where he considered secrecy as of importance, was so far from practising mystery in general, that his most important affairs were often discussed by him openly in presence of his whole family, servants included.

But far greater was his astonishment, when, remaining purposely with his daughter Brenda, a little in the wake, as he termed it, of the other riders, he heard the whole account of Norna's visit to Burgh-Westra, and of the communication with which she had then astounded his daughters. For a long time he could utter nothing but interjections, and ended with a thousand

curses on his kinswoman's folly in telling his daughters such a history of horror.

"I have often heard," said the Udaller, "that she was quite mad, with all her wisdom, and all her knowledge of the seasons; and, by the bones of my namesake, the Martyr, I begin now to believe it most assuredly. I know no more how to steer than if I had lost my compass. Had I known this before we set out, I think I had remained at home; but now that we have come so far, and that Norna expects us——"

"Expects us, father!" said Brenda; "how can that be possible?"

"Why, that I know not—but she that can tell how the wind is to blow, can tell which way we are designing to ride. She must not be provoked;—perhaps she has done my family this ill for the words I had with her about that lad Mordaunt Mertoun, and if so, she can undo it again;—and so she shall, or I will know the cause wherefore.—But I will try fair words first."

Finding it thus settled that they were to go forward, Brenda endeavoured next to learn from her father whether Norna's tale was founded in

reality. He shook his head, groaned bitterly, and, in a few words, acknowledged the whole, so far as concerned her intrigue with a stranger; and her father's death, of which she became the accidental and most innocent cause, was a matter of sad and indisputable truth. "For her infant," he said, "he could never, by any means, learn what became of it."

"Her infant!" exclaimed Brenda; "she spoke not a word of her infant!"

"Then I wish my tongue had been blistered," said the Udaller, "when I told you of it.—I see that, young and old, a man has no better chance of keeping a secret from you women, than an eel to keep himself in his hold when he is sniggled with a loop of horse-hair—sooner or later the fisher teazes him out of his hole, when he has once the noose round his neck."

"But the infant, my father?" said Brenda, still insisting on the particulars of this extraordinary story, "what became of it?"

"Carried off, I fancy, by the blackguard Vaughan," answered the Udaller, with a gruff

accent, which plainly betokened how weary he was of the subject.

"By Vaughan?" said Brenda, "the lover of poor Norna, doubtless!—what sort of man was he, father?"

"Why, much like other men, I fancy," answered the Udaller; "I never saw him in my life.—He kept company with the Scottish families at Kirkwall; and I with the good old Norse folks—Ah! if Norna had dwelt always amongst her own kin, and not kept company with her Scottish acquaintance, she would have known nothing of Vaughan, and things might have been otherwise—But then I should have known nothing of your blessed mother, Brenda—and that," he said, his large blue eyes shining with a tear, "would have saved me a short joy and a long sorrow."

"Norna could but ill have supplied my mother's place to you, father, as a companion and a friend—that is, judging from all that I have heard," said Brenda, with some hesitation. But Magnus, softened by recollections of his beloved

wife, answered her with more indulgence than she expected.

"I would have been content," he said, "to have wedded Norna at that time. It would have been the soldering of an old quarrel—the healing of an old sore. All our blood relations wished it, and, situated as I was, especially not having seen your blessed mother, I had little will to oppose their councils. You must not judge of Norna or of me by such an appearance as we now present to you—She was young and beautiful, and I gamesome as a Highland buck, and little caring what haven I made for, having, as I thought, more than one under my lee. But Norna preferred this man Vaughan, and, as I told you before, it was, perhaps, the best kindness she could have done to me."

"Ah, poor kinswoman!" said Brenda. "But believe you, father, in the high powers which she claims—in the mysterious vision of the dwarf—in the——"

She was interrupted in these questions by Magnus, to whom they were obviously displeasing.

"I believe, Brenda," he said, "according to the belief of my forefathers—I pretend not to be a wiser man than they were in their time,—and they all believed that, in cases of great worldly distress, Providence opened the eyes of the mind, and afforded the sufferers a vision of futurity. It was but a trimming of the boat, with reverence,"—here he touched his hat reverentially; "and, after all the shifting of ballast, poor Norna is as heavily loaded in the bows as ever was an Orkney-man's yawl at the dog-fishing—she has more than affliction enough on board to balance whatever gifts she may have had in the midst of her calamity. They are as painful to her, poor soul, as a crown of thorns would be to her brows, though it were the badge of the empire of Denmark. And do not you, Brenda, seek to be wiser than your fathers. Your sister Minna, before she was so ill, had as much reverence for whatever was produced in Norse, as if it had been in the Pope's bull, which is all written in pure Latin."

"Poor Norna!" repeated Brenda; "and her child—was it never recovered?"

"What do I know of her child," said the Udaller, more gruffly than before, "except that she was very ill, both before and after the birth, though we kept her as merry as we could with pipe and harp, and so forth;—the child had come before its time into this bustling world, so it is likely it has been long dead.—But you know nothing of all these matters, Brenda; so get along for a foolish girl, and ask no more questions about what it does not become you to inquire into."

So saying, the Udaller gave his sturdy little palfrey the spur, and cantering forward over rough and smooth, while the poney's accuracy and firmness of step put all difficulties of the path at secure defiance, he placed himself soon by the side of the melancholy Minna, and permitted her sister to have no farther share in his conversation than as it was addressed to them jointly. She could but comfort herself with the hope, that, as Minna's disease appeared to have its seat in the imagination, the remedies recommended by Norna might have some chance of

being effectual, since, in all probability, they would be addressed to the same faculty.

Their way had hitherto held chiefly over moss and moor, varied occasionally by the necessity of making a circuit around the heads of those long lagoons, called voes, which run up into and indent the country in such a manner, that, though the Mainland of Zetland may be thirty miles, or more, in length, there is, perhaps, no part of it which is more than three miles distant from the salt water. But they had now approached the north-western extremity of the isle, and travelled along the top of an immense ridge of rocks, which had for ages withstood the rage of the Northern Ocean, and of all the winds by which it is buffeted.

At length exclaimed Magnus to his daughters, "There is Norna's dwelling!—Look up, Minna, my love, for if this does not make you laugh, nothing will.—Saw you ever any thing but an osprey that would have made such a nest for herself as that is?—By my namesake's bones, there is not the like of it that living thing ever

dwelt in, (having no wings and the use of reason,) unless it chanced to be the Frawa-Stack off Papa, where the King's daughter of Norway was shut up to keep her from her lovers—and all to little purpose, if the tale be true;* for, maidens, I would have you to wot that it is hard to keep flax from the lowe." †

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* The *Fraw-Stack*, or Maiden-Rock, an inaccessible cliff, divided by a narrow gulph from the island of Papa, has on the summit some ruins, concerning which there is a legend similar to that of Danae.

† *Lowe*—flame.

CHAPTER XIV.

Thrice from the cavern's darksome womb
  Her groaning voice arose;
And come, my daughter, fearless come,
  And fearless tell thy woes!

MEIKLE.

THE dwelling of Norna, though none but a native of Zetland, familiar, during his whole life, with every variety of rock-scenery, could have seen any thing ludicrous in this situation, was not unaptly compared by Magnus Troil to the eyrie of the osprey, or sea-eagle. It was very small, and had been fabricated out of one of those dens which are called Burghs and Picts-houses in Zetland, and Duns on the mainland of Scotland and the Hebrides, and which seem to be the first effort at architecture,—the connecting link betwixt a fox's hole in a cairn of loose stones,

and an attempt to construct a human habitation out of the same materials, without the use of lime or cement of any kind,—without any timber, so far as can be seen from their remains,—without any knowledge of the arch or of the stair. Such as they are, however, the numerous remains of these dwellings, for there is one found on every headland, islet, or point of vantage, which could afford the inhabitants additional means of defence, tend to prove that the remote people by whom these Burghs were constructed, were a numerous race, and that the islands had then a much greater population, than, from other circumstances, we might have been led to anticipate.

The Burgh of which we at present speak had been altered and repaired at a later period, probably by some petty despot, or sea-rover, who, tempted by the security of the situation, which occupied the whole of a projecting point of rock, and was divided from the mainland by a rent or chasm of some depth, had built some additions to it in the rudest style of Gothic defensive architecture; had plaistered the inside with lime and clay, and broke out windows for the admission

of light and air; and finally, by roofing it over, and dividing it into stories, by means of beams of wreck-wood, had converted the whole into a tower, resembling a pyramidical dovecot, formed by a double wall, still containing within its thickness that set of circular galleries, or concentric rings, which is proper to all the forts of this primitive construction, and which seem to have constituted the only shelter which they were originally qualified to afford to their shivering inhabitants.

This singular habitation, built out of the loose stones which lay scattered around, and exposed for ages to the vicissitudes of the elements, was as grey, weather-beaten, and wasted, as the rock on which it was founded, and from which it could not easily be distinguished, so completely did it resemble in colour, and so little did it differ in regularity of shape, from a pinnacle or fragment of the cliff.

Minna's habitual indifference to all that of late had passed around her, was for a moment suspended by the sight of an abode, which, at another and happier period of her life, would have attracted at once her curiosity and her won-

der. Even now she seemed to feel interest as she gazed upon this singular retreat, and recollected it was that of certain misery and probable insanity, connected, as its inhabitant asserted, and Minna's faith admitted, with power over the elements, and the capacity of intercourse with the invisible world.

"Our kinswoman," she muttered, "has chosen her dwelling well, with no more of earth than a sea-fowl might rest upon, and all around sightless tempests and raging waves. Despair and magical power could not have a fitter residence."

Brenda, on the other hand, shuddered when she looked on the dwelling to which they were advancing, by a difficult, dangerous, and precarious path, which sometimes, to her great terror, approached the very verge of the precipice; so that, Zetlander as she was, and confident as she had reason to be in the steadiness and sagacity of the sure-footed poney, she could scarce suppress an inclination to giddiness, especially at one point, when, being foremost of the party, and turning a sharp angle of the rock, her feet, as they projected from the side of the poney, hung for an instant sheer over the ledge of the precipice, so

that there was nothing save empty space betwixt the sole of her shoe and the white foam of the vexed ocean, which dashed, howled, and foamed, five hundred feet below. What would have driven a maiden of another country into delirium, gave her but a momentary uneasiness, which was instantly lost in the hope that the impression which the scene appeared to make on her sister's imagination might be favourable to her cure.

She could not help looking back to see how Minna should pass the point of peril, which she herself had just rounded; and could hear the strong voice of the Udaller, though to him such rough paths were familiar as the smooth sea-beach, call, in a tone of some anxiety, "Take heed, Jarto,"* as Minna, with an eager look, dropped her bridle, and stretched forward her arms, and even her body, over the precipice, in the attitude of the wild swan, when, balancing itself, and spreading its broad pinions, it prepares to launch from the cliff upon the bosom of the winds. Brenda felt, at that instant, a pang of unutter-

* *Jarto,*—My dear.

able terror, which left a strong impression on her nerves, even when relieved, as it instantly was, by her sister recovering herself and sitting upright on her saddle, the opportunity and temptation, (if she felt it,) passing away, as the quiet steady animal which supported her rounded the projecting angle, and turned its patient and firm foot from the verge of the precipice.

They now attained a more level and open space of ground, being the flat top of an isthmus of projecting rock, narrowing again towards a point, where it was terminated by the chasm which separated the small peak, or *stack*, occupied by Norna's habitation, from the main ridge of cliff and precipice. This natural fosse, which seemed to have been the work of some convulsion of nature, was deep, dark, and irregular, narrower towards the bottom, which could not be distinctly seen, and widest at top, having the appearance as if that part of the cliff occupied by the building had been half rent away from the isthmus which it terminated,—an idea favoured by the angle at which it seemed to recede from the land, and slope sea-ward, with the building which crowned it.

This angle of projection was so considerable, that it required recollection to dispel the idea that the rock, so much removed from the perpendicular, was about to precipitate itself seaward, with its old tower; and many a timorous person would have been afraid to put foot upon it, lest an addition of weight, so inconsiderable as that of the human body, should hasten a catastrophe which seemed at every instant impending.

Without troubling himself about such fantasies, the Udaller rode towards the tower, and there dismounting along with his daughters, gave the ponies in charge to one of their domestics, with directions to disencumber them of their burthens, and turn them out for rest and refreshment upon the nearest heath. This done, they approached the gate, which seemed formerly to have connected with the land by a rude drawbridge, some of the apparatus of which was still visible. But the rest had been long demolished, and was replaced by a stationary foot-bridge, formed of barrel-staves covered with turf, very narrow and ledgeless, and supported by a sort of arch, constructed out of the jaw-bones of the

whale. Along this "brigg of dread" the Udaller stepped with his usual portly majesty of stride, which threatened its demolition and his own at the same time; his daughters trode more lightly and more safely after him, and the party stood before the low and rugged portal of Norna's habitation.

"If she should be abroad after all," said Magnus, as he plied the black oaken door with repeated blows; "but if so we will at least lie by a day for her return, and make Nick Strumpfer pay the demurrage in bland and brandy."

As he spoke the door opened, and displayed, to the alarm of Brenda, and the surprise of Minna herself, a square-made dwarf, about four feet five inches high, with a head of most portentous size, and features correspondent—namely, a huge mouth, a tremendous nose, with large black nostrils, which seemed to have slit upwards, blubber lips of an unconscionable size, and huge wall-eyes, with which he leered, sneered, grinned, and goggled on the Udaller as an old acquaintance, without uttering a single word. The young women could hardly persuade themselves that they did not see before their eyes the very demon Trolld,

who made such a distinguished figure in Norna's legend. Their father went on addressing this uncouth apparition in terms of such condescending friendship as the better sort apply to their inferiors, when they wish, for any immediate purpose, to conciliate or coax them,—a tone, by the by, which generally contains, in its very familiarity, as much offence as the more direct assumption of distance and superiority.

"Ha, Nick! honest Nick!" said the Udaller, "here you are, lively and lovely as Saint Nicholas your namesake, when he is carved with an axe for the head-piece of a Dutch dogger. How doest thou do, Nick, or Pacolet, if you like that better? Nicholas, here are my two daughters, nearly as handsome as thyself thou seest."

Nick grinned, and did a clumsy obeisance by way of courtesy, but kept his broad mis-shapen person firmly placed in the door-way.

"Daughters," continued the Udaller, who seemed to have his reasons for speaking this Cerberus fair, at least according to his own notions of propitiation,—"this is Nick Strumpfer, maidens, whom his mistress calls Pacolet, being a light-limbed dwarf, as you see, like he that wont

to fly about, like a *Scourie*, on his wooden hobby-horse, in the old story-book of Valentine and Orson, that you, Minna, used to read whilst you were a child. I assure you he can keep his mistress's counsel, and never told one of her secrets in his life—ha, ha, ha!"

The ugly dwarf grinned ten times wider than before, and shewed the meaning of the Udaller's jest, by opening his immense jaws, and throwing back his head, so as to discover, that, in the immense cavity of his mouth, there only remained the small shrivelled remnant of a tongue, capable perhaps of assisting him in swallowing his food, but unequal to the formation of articulate sounds. Whether this organ had been curtailed by cruelty, or injured by disease, it was impossible to guess; but that the unfortunate being had not been originally dumb, was evident from his retaining the sense of hearing. Having made this horrible exhibition, he repaid the Udaller's mirth with a loud, horrid, and discordant laugh, which had something in it the more hideous that his mirth seemed to be excited by his own misery.

The sisters looked on each other in silence and fear, and even the Udaller seemed disconcerted.

"And how now?" he proceeded, after a minute's pause. "When did'st thou wash that throat of thine, that is about the width of the Pentland Frith, with a cup of brandy? Ha, Nick! I have that with me which is sound stuff, boy, ha!"

The dwarf bent his beetle-brows, shook his mis-shapen head, and made a quick sharp indication, throwing his right hand up to his shoulder with the thumb pointed backwards.

"What! my kinswoman," said the Udaller, comprehending the signal, "be angry? Well, shalt have a flask to carouse when she is from home, old acquaintance;—lips and throats may swallow though they cannot speak."

Pacolet grinned a grim assent.

"And now," said the Udaller, "stand out of the way, Pacolet, and let me carry my daughters to see their kinswoman. By the bones of Saint Magnus, it shall be a good turn in thy way.—Nay, never shake thy head, man; for if thy mistress be at home, see her we will."

The dwarf again intimated the impossibility of their being admitted, partly by signs, partly by mumbling some uncouth and most disagreeable sounds, and the Udaller's mood began to arise.

"Tittle tattle, man," said he; "trouble not me with thy gibberish, but stand out of the way, and the blame, if there be any, shall rest with me."

So saying, Magnus Troil laid his sturdy hand upon the collar of the recusant dwarf's jacket of blue wadmaal, and, with a strong but not a violent grasp, removed him from the door-way, pushed him gently aside, and entered, followed by his two daughters, whom a sense of apprehension, arising out of all which they saw and heard, kept very close to him. A crooked and dusky passage, through which Magnus led the way, was dimly enlightened by a shot-hole, communicating with the interior of the building, and originally intended doubtless to command the entrance by a hagbut or culverin. As they approached nearer, for they walked slowly and with hesitation, the light, imperfect as it was, was suddenly obscured; and, on looking upward to discern the cause,

Brenda was startled to observe the pale and obscurely-seen countenance of Norna gazing downwards upon them, without speaking a word. There was nothing extraordinary in this, as the mistress of the mansion might be naturally enough looking out to see what guests were thus suddenly and unceremoniously intruding themselves on her presence. Still, however, the natural paleness of her features, exaggerated by the light in which they were at present exhibited,—the immoveable sternness of her look, which shewed neither kindness nor courtesy of civil reception,—her dead silence, and the singular appearance of every thing about her dwelling, augmented the dismay which Brenda had already conceived. Magnus Troil and Minna had walked slowly forward, without observing the apparition of their singular hostess.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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